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Children's Retreats

PREPARING FOR

FIRST CONFESSION, FIRST HOLY
COMMUNION *and* CONFIRMATION

BY THE

Rev. P. A. HALPIN

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Second Edition, enlarged by an Appendix of
Examples and Anecdotes

NEW YORK
JOSEPH F. WAGNER
1909

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JOHN M. FARLEY, D.D.

Archbishop of New York

NEW YORK, August 6, 1907

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Conferences for Children's Retreats.

I. A RETREAT BEFORE FIRST CONFESSION.

I.—INTRODUCTORY.

My dear children, in a few days you will go to confession for the first time. Confession must always be made well. So, in order that every time you confess your sins you may be sure that you have neglected nothing, and have told every one of your faults and have been sorry for them in the right way, the greatest care must be taken that the very first confession you make be so good that it will be the beginning of many, many confessions, all ending with the last, which will be at the hour of death, and will be so well done that you will not be afraid to die, but rather be glad. If this was not the case we would not go to all the trouble to which you see we have gone to teach you how to perform this act as you should and as you must. You have been coming to Catechism every Sunday, and during the whole of Lent you were with your teachers every day. You had so many pages of your Catechism to learn by heart, and to learn in such a way that you will never forget them. You have been examined by your teachers and by your priest, and all you who are now listening to me have passed well.

A great many others began with you, but they are not here now, because either they did not learn their Catechism well enough or because they did not come regularly to their class.

You know well the part of your little book which must be learned before one can be allowed to approach the Sacrament of Penance. Besides, you were never absent. So you have won a very great

prize, the prize of being permitted to go to Confession. It is a reward so great that it is only when you have entered heaven that you will know how great it is. You have not yet done all that is necessary; that is, you have not done enough to make yourselves ready for this wonderful Sacrament. Twice a day for three days you are to come to the church and I will go over with you everything you know so well by heart. You are young, and you are easily made tired by anything that is not play. I will not keep you long. I will not talk to you in any instruction for more than twenty minutes, at the end of which I will keep you ten minutes more asking you questions and letting you ask me questions, so that there will be nothing that you will not understand.

In the prayer we say at the beginning of each instruction you will ask God, through the most Sacred Heart of Jesus and through the Immaculate Heart of Mary, to give you the grace of being attentive, of understanding and of being made every minute more ready for the great day of your first confession. In this way I feel that, with God's help, you will be so happy after your first confession that you will always remember the day on which you made it, and will always be glad whenever the time comes for you to make other confessions. Our Holy Father, the Pope, is very fond of Sunday schools and Sunday school children. He has written to all the bishops of the world begging of them to take care of all his little children, and to see that they are well prepared for all the Sacraments, especially for those of Penance and Communion. Now, I ask you, since all that I say is true—I ask you, do you not think you should do your best to fit yourselves for the great Sacrament? I hear every boy and every girl here say yes to my question. You know we want our children to be very good in every way. I think that you all want to be good, too. I am sure there is no one here

that intends to be a bad girl or a bad boy, a bad man or a bad woman, is there? Why do we want you all to be good? Because we want the world to be good.

If everybody in the world was good what a different world it would be! There would be no more cursing, nor swearing, nor stealing, nor becoming angry or jealous. Nobody would hurt another. There would be no more murder, and, perhaps, or rather certainly, no more wars. What a beautiful place this would be to live in then! Besides, then everybody would be saved, that is, everybody would go to heaven and be with God forever. Now you see why we want all our children to be good, because then there is a chance that they will keep on growing good until they are men and women, and thus the world will be better for all that. Nothing helps more to make and keep children as they should be than going to confession. But if your confession is not made well it will not help at all. It is pretty true that if your first confession is made properly that all your following confessions will be made properly, too. Now I have given you some reasons why you should do all you can to so prepare yourselves for this first confession that when it is over it will be something you will never forget and will always be glad to remember.

I am going to tell you about a remarkable Sunday school teacher. He is on the list of the holy ones of our Church. He is a saint. He is now in heaven. He has been there with God and Christ and the Blessed Virgin and the angels and the saints ever since he died, and that was just two hundred and forty-seven years ago. That is a long while to be in heaven. So it may seem to you and me, but to him it has all passed like a flash. This saint's name is Joseph Calasancius. He founded a society of priests. They were called "The Poor Regular Clergy of the Pious Schools of the Mother of God." When

he was a child and during his boyhood he practised all the virtues. At school he spoke very often of the wonderful things in the Catechism, and especially about the best way of praying. He became a very learned man. He made a vow. Do you know what that means? It means a most solemn promise. He made a vow that he would be as good in thought, word and deed as it was possible for him to be. He was very fond of children, and they were very fond of him and liked to listen to him talking about Confession and Communion and the other things of God. When he was but a child himself he used to call them around him. He became a priest. He was a Spaniard, but went to Rome, and there did very many striking things for God and the Church. He was a lover of the poor, and during a plague he carried the bodies of the dead on his shoulders and buried them.

Finally, when the Holy Ghost spoke to him, he started that society of poor priests, and the duty of that society was to teach children. The poor children of that day did not have so many to teach them as you have now. That society went all over Europe gathering children together, teaching them Catechism and preparing them to receive the great Sacraments of Confession and Communion.

This St. Joseph lived till he was ninety-two years old. The blessed Mother of God, to whom he was very dear—first, on account of his pure life, and, secondly, on account of the care he took of children—told him the day on which he was going to die, and on that day his sinless soul was received by her into heaven. This happened in the year sixteen hundred and forty-eight. One hundred years after he left this world his heart and tongue were found just as they had been in life.

Now I am sure you are asking me why I talk of this holy man. I know you are all asking what has this St. Joseph to do with

Catechism. The reason I spoke of him is this: If God loved him so much because he made teaching Catechism the work of his life, I ask you, does that not show what God thinks of the need of children knowing their Catechism? Now what God thinks, my dear children, you must try and think, just as what God hates you must hate, and what God loves you must love.

You understand now that you should know your Catechism better than anything else you know. In fact, you might know everything else, you might become very learned in all other things, but if you do not hold your Catechism firmly in your memory everything else will be worth nothing at all. You wonder why the priest speaks so very often about Sunday school and Catechism. You see why now. You have learned in your Sunday school and you have read in your Catechism that God made you. Why did He make you? I see the answer on your lips. God made you. God was not obliged to make you—nobody could force Him to make you; He made you of His own free will. He must have made you for some reason. God never acts without a reason. You and I do sometimes, but the Lord never. Your Catechism tells you that He created you to know Him and to serve Him and to love Him in this life, and to be happy with Him forever in the next. If you do not know Him, or if you know Him and do not serve Him, you can not be happy in the next world. If you are not happy in the other world, you are certainly going to be unhappy and miserable. And as the other world has no death in it, as in the next world everybody is going to live forever, it is as certain as certain can be, if one is unhappy there and wretched, one is unhappy and wretched forever and ever.

Not one of us wishes to be unhappy, even for a second, and surely not one of us could bear the thought of being unhappy forever. Children meet with all sorts of accidents about which we hear and

read every day. They meet with terrible accidents; they lose their legs and their arms. They are crippled for life. Not only that, but they are killed. We can not bear even to think of these things. Can you tell me which is worse: to be lame or blind, or deaf and dumb, or even to die, or, to go on living forever—forever, mind you, in the other world, without being cared for or loved by anybody, to be in darkness and in suffering more cruel than anything anybody has known in this life, and that always and without end? I know what your answer is. You will tell me at once that it is better, oh better than any one can think, to be in all kinds of pain here for years and years than to be in torture forever in the life after the grave.

It is your Catechism which teaches you all this, and remember that in many parts of the world there are boys and girls who know nothing at all about these things. You would know nothing yourselves if there had not been your parents to tell you about it or to send you where you would hear about it. Suppose I ask you what you ought to do now that I have been telling you how necessary Catechism is, what will you answer? I think I hear you all say that, no matter how well you studied your Sunday school lessons before, you are going to study harder now and until you make your first Communion and until you are confirmed, that is, until you receive the Sacrament which gives you the Holy Ghost. I think I hear you all say that, no matter how careful you have been up to now in being present at every Sunday school class, you will let nothing in the future keep you away.

Those are two good resolutions. "Resolution" is a big word, but I have an idea that you know what it means. When you make a resolution you make a strong promise to God and to yourself that you will do something that pleases Him and is useful to you. Your Catechism has taught you that it is more worth your while to be

happy in the next world than to be happy here, that you must take more care of your soul than of your body, for the simple reason that the body will die one day and the soul will never die. There is only one thing that can hurt the soul. What is that one thing? Sin.

If, when you leave this world, there is a mortal sin on your soul, your soul will not die, because it can not, but your soul will be in punishment always. You see at once that there is really only one thing to be afraid of, and that one thing is sin. There are very few who do not commit sin. Thank God there are a great many who never become guilty of mortal sin. But in case somebody does something that is so bad that we have to call it mortal sin, must that person keep that sin with him forever? Is there no way of getting rid of it? You will at once tell me that there is one sure way, and that one sure way is Confession. Confession, if it can take away sin from a man's soul, must be a wonderful thing, a most wonderful thing. Yet Confession can do all that. You, these days, are getting ready for that wonderful thing, Confession. Is it not clear to you that you can not prepare yourselves too well? In these instructions I am going to help you to be so ready the day you go to Confession that you will make no mistake, and do everything so well that when the priest tells you to leave the box there will not be a single sin on your souls.

We are going to talk about Confession and about Confession only, and about everything that is a part of Confession and about everything that has anything to do with Confession, therefore about Sacraments, examination of conscience, and above all about sin, so that you may learn to hate it more than anything in this life, so that you may learn to love with all your heart that great Sacrament which has the power not only to wash away sin, but to make you so strong that you will be better able to resist sin.

Now it is time for you to ask me questions about what I have said, and, above all, to ask me the meaning of any big word that I may have used while I was speaking to you. And when all is over, which will be in a few minutes, we will all kneel down and pray, and in our prayer ask God to teach us how to make a good Confession, how to be heartily sorry for our sins and how to keep the promise we make, never again to sin.

II.—THE SACRAMENT.

My dear children, the first thing you have to know about Confession is, that it is a word which tells only of one part of the great Sacrament for which you are trying to make yourselves ready and worthy. Confession means: making something known to some one besides ourselves. For you just now, to confess is to make known your sins to a priest. Still that is not the whole Sacrament. The Sacrament is whole when, after you have told your sins to the priest, you show your sorrow and receive from Him some Penance and then Absolution. Yet though we use the word Confession, which is only a part of the Sacrament, we mean the entire Sacrament. To understand what Confession is, then, you must fix in your minds what a Sacrament is, what Confession is, what Absolution is, and what Penance or Satisfaction is.

Everything must be clear in your thoughts about what you learn in your Catechism, but above all the words of the Catechism must be held without any change by you. When asked a question, the words you use in answering must be those of your little book. Never change them. You may not know just now all that they mean, but later you will, and you will find in them a great help to let others know what your Holy Church teaches. I am going to talk about the Sacrament of Penance. So we will run over the words of our Catechism to find out first what a Sacrament is, and secondly what the Sacrament of Penance is.

What is a Sacrament? Before I begin to explain what a Sacrament is, I will tell you a little bit of history about Catechism. Your Catechism is a very small book. Three hundred and sixty years ago, at a place called Trent, which is a town in Austria, the Pope

called together the bishops and doctors of the Church. At his bidding in that far-off place came together many archbishops and bishops and some sixty priests. They were from nearly everywhere. This great meeting was more than once obliged to give up its work, sometimes on account of the plague, sometimes on account of wars, again on account of the death of a Pope. Altogether, with breaks, it lasted from 1545 until 1563, that is eighteen years. During all their meetings they spoke of many things concerning the Catholic Church, but there is one thing they had always before their minds, and that one thing was the Catechism. These archbishops and bishops ordered that a Catechism should be made, that it should be printed in all the languages of the world and explained to the people. It was a very large book when finished, but in your little Catechism you have, taken out of that large book, everything that is necessary for you to know in order to be a Catholic who understands what he believes, as well as to be a Catholic who thinks and speaks and acts as a true, that is, as a real Catholic should. You see how much the Church thinks of the Catechism and how much you should love your little book, which means so much for you now and will always mean much for you. That Catechism, of which I have just told you the history, answers the question which I asked above.

You remember that question was: What is a Sacrament? A Sacrament, says the Catechism of Trent, is a visible sign of invisible grace instituted by Christ for our justification. Your little book may use different words, but they mean the same thing. Your Catechism calls a Sacrament an outward sign of inward grace, instituted by Christ to give grace to our souls. The words we use to tell what a thing is are called a definition. I have given you the definition of a Sacrament, and in order to understand the definition

we must take every word of it and get at the meaning of each one. There is the word which will be used very often these days, it is the word Sacrament. Sacrament, in a general way, means something holy. Everything is holy that has to do with God, with Christ, with the saints, with the Church. You know what holy water is. It is blessed by the priest for those who belong to the Church, and it can not be used in the same way as other water is used. The chalice and all the vessels belonging to the Church are holy. They can not be used as other vessels are made use of. This very church in which you are sitting now is holy. You may not act in it as you would in your own houses. A holy thing is something which must be treated differently from all other things.

You remember, perhaps, hearing that when Moses was keeping the sheep of his master, he came to a mountain, and looking up he saw an angel in a flame of fire, and in the midst of a bush. The bush was on fire but was not burned. As he was going near he heard a voice saying: "Come not nigh, put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy." Because it was holy he could not walk on that ground as he would on other ground. All this shows how careful we must be about holy things. Now, what you must always keep in mind is that a Sacrament, that every Sacrament, is holy, and therefore you would be doing wrong to behave toward it as you behave toward other things.

This much learned, we will study with care every word in that little phrase which defines, that is which tells you, what a Sacrament is. There are three things necessary to make up a Sacrament. These three things are (a) an outward sign, (b) made by Christ, (c) to give us grace; that is, to make us holy. When you have all these three you have a Sacrament. If only one of these three things is missing you have no Sacrament. I have, therefore, to teach what

an outward sign is, what we mean when we say "instituted by Christ," and what "giving grace" is. After all that is made clear, I will show how these three things are found in Confession or in Penance. What is an outward sign? It is a sign which can be seen, which is not hidden. I suppose you all can tell me what a sign is. You use signs very often. Sometimes in Sunday school a boy or girl puts up a hand. That is a sign for the teacher. Let me tell you right here that a sign is something that lets us know something else. To come back to my example. A hand is raised in class. No word is said to the teacher, but still the teacher knows not only that you have lifted up your hand, but that either you wish to answer something which he has asked, or that you want to get some permission. That lifting up of your hand is an outward sign, because it can be seen. You are going along the street and in a window you see a bonnet, that bonnet is a sign that in the store to which the window belongs they make hats for little girls and grown-up women. These are all signs. If you see tears in your mother's eyes, those tears are a sign that your mother is suffering or is weeping for some loss. So much for signs.

Now, a Sacrament must be a sign which tells you of something else, of something more than you can see, of something that is being done, of something which is going on. What takes place or what is being done, or what is going on in Confession? You are being forgiven your sins; God is pardoning you everything that you have done against Him. What outward sign have we of all that? What is there in the Sacrament of Penance which makes us know that sins are being forgiven? What do you see? You see a kneeling child in presence of a father. There, you say at once, is a poor child making a confession of all his faults to the priest, who takes the place of God. You say that child would not do that if he did not expect

to be forgiven. All that you see in the Sacrament of Penance is an outward sign of all that God does for those who go to Confession. Penance, therefore, is an outward sign, and in so much begins to be a Sacrament. The second of those three things without which you can not have a Sacrament is that every Sacrament must be instituted by Christ; that is, must be made by Christ. The Church can not make a Sacrament, nor the Pope, nor a cardinal, nor a bishop, nor a priest, nor any one but Christ. I wonder could you understand why this is so. I will try to explain it to you. What do the seven Sacraments give to every one who receives them in the right way? I hear you all say the seven Sacraments give grace. But grace is very hard to understand. It will be enough for me just now to tell you that grace is a gift of God. It is called a gift of God because nobody but God can give it. Now, as every Sacrament holds grace within itself, as there is no Sacrament without grace, you may readily understand that only God, or Christ, who is both God and man, can make a Sacrament. For since there is in every Sacrament grace; since the Sacrament is meant for no other end than to give grace, every Sacrament must be made by God, or Christ, who is the only one who can give grace. Perhaps this is a little too hard for you. I will ask about it at the end of this instruction.

We have brought together two parts of the Sacrament. How do we know that Christ made this Sacrament? We know it because the Church tells us so, and whatever the Church teaches God teaches, who can neither deceive me nor be deceived by me. Besides, if you take up your New Testament some day and turn to the sixteenth chapter of St. Matthew, you will read that Our Lord said to St. Peter, "Thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build my church and I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven. and whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth shall be bound in heaven,

and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven.” In saying these words He gave, through St. Peter, the first head of the Church after Christ, to all the priests that have been in the world and will be in the world until the end of time, the power to forgive sins: in other words He that is Christ instituted the Sacrament of Penance in which sins are pardoned. We have now put two parts of the Sacrament together. There remains for us to look at the third part. Not only must a Sacrament be an outward sign and be instituted by Christ, it must also give grace. I wonder if it be possible for me to make you understand what grace is? In the first place it is something from God, and from God alone. Moreover it is something invisible, something which does not fall under our eyes or under any of our five senses. Again, it is something real, something real like the stars; like electricity, like air, like a perfume. We know that there are things which our eyes have never seen, and yet we are certain they are really something. You have never seen the breeze, but you know it really has being; it is a real something. Grace, too, though you have never looked at it or felt it in any way, is a real thing. It is something which God alone can give, it is invisible, it is real, and, lastly, it is strength. I may use the word definition as much as I wish now, because I told you the meaning of it. The definition of grace would be something like this: Grace is a gift of God *which helps us to be good in thought, in word, and in deed*; which helps us to keep all His commandments. It is a free gift. God is not obliged to give us grace, but He will give it to us whenever we ask for it in the right way, and whenever we do what He tells us we must do in order to get it. It is not only a free gift, it is necessary for us. Without it we can not even pronounce as we should the holy name of Jesus. Without it we can not avoid sin; without it we can not live well, we can

not die well, we can not be saved, we can not enter the kingdom of heaven. In the Sacrament of Penance we receive many graces; so many, in fact, that we can not count them.

This preparation you are making for first Confession is a grace, the wish you all have to make a good confession is a grace; the sorrow you are beginning to feel for your sins even now is a grace; your telling every one of your faults without hiding a single one of them is a grace. But all these graces are not the great grace of confession. The chief grace of the Sacrament of Penance is being made clean in your souls, in your thoughts, in your words, in your actions; the great grace, the special grace of Confession, is being pardoned your sins, is being made holy, is being made just. Sin makes the soul ugly. Sin soils, sin spots the soul. The grace of the Sacrament, which in a few days you are going to receive for the first time, will whiten your souls and take away all the spots.

Is not grace, which does all this, a sweet and a lovely and a beautiful angel of God? You know what money is and what it can do. Yet not all the money in the world can do for you what grace can. Yet, grace is a kind of money more precious than any gold. It can buy bright thoughts and pure words and deeds worth more than pearls for you.

My dear children, I want one thought to be on your minds every minute of every hour of every one of these days. It is the thought that in your first Confession God is going to dress your souls in the beautiful robe of His grace. Beg of Him to help you to keep that robe as beautiful as it is when He puts it on you when you make your first Confession, to keep it beautiful always, so that when you lie down in death there will not be a stain upon it, there will not be a rent in it, but it will still be a garment rich and lovely enough to pass through the doors of heaven with and to be glad with among the angels forever and forever.

III.—SIN.

You ought by this time, my dear children, to know and understand what a Sacrament is and what particular kind of a Sacrament Penance is. You know the definition by heart; your teachers have explained it many times, and the whole of the last instruction was taken up in trying to make all this clear to you. Every Sacrament brings grace to the soul that receives it. When you were baptized, some six or seven years ago, a very great grace was given to you. You were brought here little babes to the church—I am sure I baptized some of you—in a state of original sin. It was no wrong you had done yourselves. You were simply born with that sin. No sin can ever enter heaven. If you had died on your way to the church, or at any time before being baptized, you would have always been outside the gates of that beautiful place where the angels are. But, thank God, you are baptized. What grace did you receive? That sin I speak of, and which we call original, and with which every one is born, that sin was washed away. Your soul became pure in the sight of God, you were made His children and He gave you a right to enter the kingdom of heaven. If you had died a year ago or two or three or more years ago your souls would have gone at once into where God and the saints are. When you are grown up—I mean when you reach the age of reason, as it is called—then you run the risk of committing a mortal sin. As long as you are in that mortal sin, as long as it remains with you, you are in great danger of being lost forever, of never seeing God. I like to think that all the boys and girls here have not done any serious wrong. I like to believe, and I think I am right in believing it, that most Catholic boys and girls come to their seventh year, or tenth for that

matter, without willingly saying or thinking or doing anything which it is not permitted by the commandments to say or to think or to do. From what I know of children I really feel certain that a great many of them so live during the days of their early childhood that if they were to die without the chance of seeing the priest their souls would not be lost. Those souls of theirs might have to stay a little while in purgatory, but they would sooner or later enter into the kingdom of heaven. I am sure that while I am talking to you I am looking at many who have not so far been guilty of a mortal sin. Is not that a beautiful way to live? Would it not be splendid to live that way all your lives, no matter if your lives were to last one hundred years? You can do it. I wish you to pray that that may be the fruit of your first Confession. I wish you, every time you think of that confession, to say to yourselves with God's help you will never do anything that might be a mortal sin after He has been so merciful as to pardon you everything and has given you a chance to begin all over again.

It is well for you to have some idea of what sin is. You must try to understand that sin is the worst thing that can happen in your life. It is worse than all the suffering you can think of. It is worse than being poor or sick or dying. I mean it does you more harm than any of these things. I mean it would be better for you to have and to let all these things happen to you than to commit one sin, even one venial sin.

What is sin? You know that it is something wrong, something you should not do. But your Catechism tells you more about sin than that. Your Catechism tells you that sin is any wilful thought or word or deed or omission against the law of God or against the law of the Church. You will notice in the first place that you can do wrong in four ways. You can do wrong by thinking wrong,

by saying wrong, by doing wrong and by omission; that is, by not doing what the commandments tell you to do. You must remember that in order to commit a sin you must be free. You must, moreover, know that what you are doing is wrong. Do not forget this. You must be free. If you are not free no matter what you do there is no sin. It is a sin to steal; but, suppose now, somebody would take your hand in spite of you, that is against your will, and force you to put it into somebody's pocket and take out of that pocket some money, would you in that case be guilty of theft? Certainly not. Why? Because you did not do that act of stealing of your own free will. Somebody else made you do it. Two things are necessary for every sin. If one of those two things is missing you do not commit a sin. You must know that what you are doing is wrong. If you do not know that it is a sin, no matter what it is, it is not a sin for you. Sometimes a child walks in its sleep. A child like that might set the house on fire. To burn down a house and destroy some lives would, beyond doubt, be a very great sin. But the child does all this in its sleep; does it become guilty of an awful crime? No. Why? Because the child, being asleep, did not know what it was doing, and so, though great harm followed its act, yet because it was not aware of what it was doing there was no sin at all. You see that in one way it is easy and in another way it is hard to commit a sin. It is well to know that we need never fall into sin unless we wish to.

There are two kinds of sin. There is original sin, that is the sin in which every one is born. Original sin we do not commit, it is not something we do ourselves. It is a state in which we come into the world. It is like being born blind or deaf or lame. But we must get rid of it in order to become a child of God and have a right, if we do as we should, to go to heaven.

Baptism, the first Sacrament, which all who wish to be saved must receive, gives us that grace, changes the state of the soul and makes it fit to see God. Without Baptism you can not receive any of the other Sacraments, because as long as we are in the original sin we are not members of the Church and so the Sacraments are not for us. Baptism opens the gate to the other Sacraments and all the blessings of the Church. Besides original sin there is actual sin. Actual sin is the sin we commit ourselves of our own free will. It is the sin of which we make ourselves guilty when we know that what we are doing is wrong, and, knowing that, do it of our own accord, in spite of the commandments. There are two kinds of actual sin; there is only one kind of original sin. The two kinds of actual sin are called mortal and venial. The actual sin, which is called mortal, is that sin which is a very serious act against the law of God. When I say act I mean not only a deed, or what we do, but I mean as well a thought or a word, for you must never forget that in four ways you may break God's holy law.

The four ways are by thought, by word, by deed, and by omission. You do wrong by omission when you do not do what is ordered by the law of God; for example, if you do not go to Mass on Sunday or holidays of obligation, the sin is a sin of omission, because you refuse to do what has been commanded by God and by the Church. Now a mortal sin is a very great sin. It is called mortal, because if one dies in mortal sin the soul is dead; that is, is lost forever. Mortal sin is the worst thing that can happen to you or to any one in this world. Keep that in your minds always. This thought will keep you on your guard the whole time, and you will do all that is in your power to not be guilty of mortal sin. Every morning you must say to yourselves: There is one thing I am not going to do to-day, and that one thing is, I am not going to fall

into mortal sin. You will pray for this great grace daily. Always remember that with God's grace and your own strong will nothing in this wide world will be able to make you commit a mortal sin. There was a queen of France, and many and many times she used to say to her young son, who became king and also a saint, "My child, you know how much I love you. I love you so much that I would willingly give up my life for you. Yet much as I love you I would sooner see you fall dead now at my feet than to have you commit one mortal sin." This lesson repeated and repeated had a strong and lasting effect on the young prince and he remembered his mother's words all the days of his life, and he hated mortal sin more than sickness or suffering or death.

Once more I ask you to think how wonderful a thing the Sacrament of Penance or Confession is that, in two or three or five minutes, can take away that awful danger from your souls. But Confession does that only when you make it well. So, again, do all that you can during these days to be perfectly ready, so that when you tell all the sins of your very short lives God will be so pleased with your preparation that He will wipe out every stain that may be on your souls, just as you rub out with a sponge all the chalk marks that may be on your slates, so that you may begin writing over again. Your souls once made white by Confession will be ready for you to put anything on them; they will be ready for you to write good and kind thoughts, beautiful words and splendid deeds. You will make up your minds firmly that there is one thing you will never let into your souls, and that one thing is sin. I can not tell you how happy that will make you. Do you know of anything that can make you more glad than to be sure that, no matter how quickly you may die, or when or where or how you may die, your soul will be received into the arms of God your Father and

kept in those arms forever? That is the way to live up to the words of the Catechism. Why did God make you? God made me to know Him and love Him and obey Him in this life, and to be happy with Him forever in the next. In this way you will love Him and obey Him in this world, and you will be happy with Him forever in the world which you enter after death. That is the only way to live, and that is the only way to die.

I will have a good deal to say about sin; in fact, I feel that I must say very much about sin, because I want you to hate it with all your hearts. Your Catechism asks you how must you love God, and the answer is that "thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart and with thy whole soul and with thy whole mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment." There is another greatest and first commandment. It is this: Thou shalt hate all kinds of sin with thy whole heart and with thy whole soul and with thy whole mind. These two commandments are almost one and the same. You can not love God without hating sin, and it is impossible to hate sin without loving God. So, if you wish to prove to yourselves that you love God, ask yourselves whether you hate sin.

Of course, most of what I have so far spoken has to do with mortal sin. There is another kind of actual sin. It is called venial sin. Venial sin is not as great a sin as mortal sin. It does not bring the soul to hell. If, when one dies, one is in the state of venial sin—that is, if one has no mortal sin—then the soul is not lost. The soul in this case will not go to the prison house, from which there is no escape forever, but the soul will have to stay for some time in a place of punishment, which is called purgatory, and where it will do penance until it is fit to take its place among the blessed in heaven. To tell a lie, for example, a lie which does harm

to nobody, a lie to get out of some trouble, a lie of excuse, is a venial sin. But to utter a falsehood which does damage to somebody's good name would be a mortal sin. To steal a pin or something of very little value would be a venial sin, but to take a large sum from another would surely be something which would offend God greatly, and so be a mortal sin. Every wrong word or wrong thought or wrong act offends Our Father who is in heaven, but there are some wrong things which anger Him more than others. That is the reason why some actual sins are called mortal and some venial.

Of course, we should be more on guard against mortal than against venial sin, but the best plan is to make up our minds that nothing in this whole world will be able to force us into any kind of sin. If you were to say to yourselves, my dear children, each one of you, "I will do my best not to fall into mortal sin, but as to venial sin I will not be so careful," I would be afraid that, little by little, you would get nearer the edge of mortal sin and finally tumble in. But if I heard you say, "I am not going to commit any sin at all, not even the lightest," then I would begin to hope that, little by little, you would grow to hate all sin, and that thus you would pass all the days of your life without ever once being obliged to tell in confession a mortal sin, for the simple reason that you kept away from that great evil altogether. Remember your Maker in the days of your youth, but remember Him with love, and no grievous fault will you ever be blamed for, either by God or by your own souls. Remember your Maker with love and with thanks. He has been so good to you. He has never done you any harm. He made you for Himself. Sometimes there are golden hours and very happy days in this life, but they are nothing to the glad hours and glad days that God is preparing for you in heaven, and which will surely be yours if you love Him and hate sin.

IV. RESOLUTION.

I would like, my dear children, to do two things for you during these days of preparation for your first Confession. It would please me very much and I would give great thanks to God, if I helped you to receive the Sacrament of Penance in the best possible way, and if I coaxed you to make a promise to never commit sin, a promise so strong that nothing in this great, big world could make you break it.

You must pray to obtain these two graces. There is really nothing else which God might give you which would make you so happy as that double grace. You may do much; in fact, there is hardly anything that you can not do by prayer. But there is something else which will aid you. That one thing is to think. I know that it is not very easy for children of your age to keep your minds upon anything seriously for a long time. But still you may, if you will, do a little thinking. You know yourselves that it is worth your while to think. You do quite a number of things without thinking. Some of them are not wrong, but some of them are, and you give as an excuse—not seldom, when your father or your mother is offended with you—you give as an excuse that you did what they are questioning you about, without thinking. In fact, you say to yourselves, when you look at some of your actions, that you wonder why you did them, and that if you had thought just for one moment more you would never, never have said such a word or been guilty of such an action. Now you understand why I ask you to think.

I am going to beg of you to think just a very little. I am going to beg of you to think about sin, so that you will always remember that it is the worst thing that can happen to you. Every day of your lives you will be asked to do something that God forbids. The devil

will ask you, and what is called the world will ask you, and sometimes you will desire of your own selves, to commit sin. This means that every day of your life you must fight against this great danger, it means that until you die you will scarcely be free for a single day from the risk of falling into sin. You must therefore prepare for this fight every day. If you begin now to stand up against sin you will grow braver and braver, so that in the end sin will be more afraid of you than you will be afraid of sin. You know that you need never fall into sin unless you will it. You know that your enemy is very strong, but he is never strong enough to beat you against your will. He is very powerful, but he is not more powerful than God and you together. Hence, if you really mean to keep away from sin, God will always be on your side and you will always win.

Look at the helpers you have. Look at those who take part in this fight. There you are yourself, and if in the awful moment you pray, at once on your side stand your beautiful guardian angel and your loving Mother, the blessed Virgin Mary, and God with His grace: against you there is only the devil. Now, in a fight like that who ought to win? You say immediately, why, I ought to win. So it is, my dear children. Remember this when you are tempted to do wrong. Remember how many and how powerful are those upon whom you have every right to call; remember that they will be at your side just as soon as they hear your cry. Remember this and do not give way, but be brave soldiers and fight hard, and think that God and Christ and the queen of heaven and all the angels are looking down upon you, and that there will be great joy in heaven because you have fought well and won the crown.

You must become more and more sure that there is one thing that you will never let enter your life. I have said it so often that at once

you say, that one thing is sin. You see, I am saying many things over and over again. The reason is that I am more anxious than I can tell you to have this thought of mine against sin stick forever in your minds. I wish the hatred for sin, for any kind of sin, for all sin, to be so strong that no matter where or how you see it you will have so powerful a disgust for it that the very sight of it will not only make you afraid, but really sicken you, so that you will run away from it at once.

I am looking ahead to the future—to your future. You may be all right now, but I have in my mind the days that are to come. I am afraid of those days. I do not know what they will bring you. You know that sometimes children who are very good when they grow up change their lives altogether. They forget their Church and all that their Church bids them do. When younger they never missed Mass on Sundays or holydays of obligation; they always said their morning and their night prayers; they never ate meat on Friday or on days on which it was not allowed. Their lives are not the same as when they were young, as when they were preparing for their first Confession. What has come over them? They have simply lost their hatred for sin; they are no longer afraid of it. They used to go to Confession and Communion once every month, and now they scarcely go once a year. They used to love to go to the Sacraments, they felt so happy after receiving absolution, and now they have lost their taste for all the good practices of their early days, and at last a time comes when they forget their Church altogether, and you know, my dear children, that when they forget their Church, it is the same thing as forgetting God, and you understand that they are running a great risk of never seeing God at all. Can you imagine anything more awful than that?

What brings such a state of things about? That terrible thing will always happen when one begins to lose hatred for sin. You do not wonder, I am sure, when I tell you all these things about sin, you do not wonder why I am all the time begging you to ask God to make you feel toward sin as you feel toward cholera, smallpox, yellow fever or death. When you start in to stop hating sin you begin to love it. You know how dangerous it is to trust one you know is your worst enemy. You never can tell when such an enemy will lie in wait for you to do you harm. Your worst enemy can not begin to hurt you as much as sin. Sin can cast you body and soul into hell and forever. Sin will hate you as much as you love it. Sin will never spare you. Sin will never have any mercy upon you. Sin will never be satisfied till it makes you its slave. Sin will never stop until it owns you body and soul. Sin wants only one thing, and that is your soul. Sin means only one thing, and that is to keep your soul wretched in this life and prevent it from ever being happy with God in the next.

So you see sin is your worst enemy. Sin is a murderer. Sin is an assassin, that is, one who kills by a stab in the dark. I can not say things bad enough about sin. I can not paint it black enough for you. Have you ever heard of all the harm done by sin? No, my dear children, not all the books in the world would be able to hold all the evil for which we must blame sin. You have been told about the beautiful angels. They were the first creatures God made for Himself. I could not make you understand how bright they are. They are the messengers of God. They come to us from Him, and they go from us to Him. As some one has said in verse :

“Around our pillows golden ladders rise,
And up and down the skies,
With winged sandals shod,
The angels come and go, the messengers of God.”

They are more lovely than you can dream of. You have seen them in pictures, but those pictures do not give you the least idea of how fair they are. God did not place them in heaven at once. It was necessary for them, as it is for us, to fight their way to perfect happiness. They were to be tried, and if they were found faithful then an eternal crown was to be theirs; but if they were found wanting then they were to be forever miserable. The trial God put them to was to them what a temptation is to us. You know a temptation is something that asks us to do wrong, something that asks us to break the commandments in some way or other, something that asks us to disobey God. We know that we have many temptations. The angels had only one which in some way or other invited them not to do what God told them to do, which, in other words, invited them to commit sin. Nobody knows what kind of a temptation it was. Try, my dear children, to let your thoughts go back, oh, so many years, until you get to that moment when the trial of the angels took place. They were not yet in heaven, remember. As I told you, they had to win heaven as we have to win it. They had to fight for it as we have to fight for it. If they had been in heaven they would have seen God, and once having seen God they would love Him so much that they could not love anything else but Him, and therefore could not love sin. Try and make a picture in your own minds of all those angels. They were so good to look upon. Then there were so many. Look upon that shining army, bright as the sun and beautiful as the moon. Think how God, looking down upon them, must have loved them. Now listen to the order of the Almighty. Possibly St. Gabriel, the archangel, sent the sound of his trumpet through all their ranks and told them what the Lord wished them to do. They heard the command. It must have been something not at all easy to do.

It was so hard that every angel may have halted and wondered. Every one is fighting with himself. Each one says, will I or will I not obey? It is all done in a second. Many say, I will not serve; the others all say, I will obey because God is not only my Father, but my Master, and whatever He orders must be done.

St. John, the apostle—it was he who wrote one of the four gospels, and then, in his old age, the last book in the Bible, which is called the Apocalypse, and in which he tells us that he had been carried to the highest heaven, and had been allowed to see the wonderful things therein, the wonderful things not only of the present, but of the past and the future, gives us just a little bit of news of that minute which was so full of danger for those angels. Think, if you can, how many were the angels. They can not be counted; they are more in number than the grains of sand on all the shores of the world; they are more in number than all the drops of all the rivers and lakes and seas and oceans anywhere and everywhere.

Some of those angels would not listen to God. They did what pleased themselves, and did not care whether they did something displeasing to their Maker. They did not know how much they displeased Him. Had they known how angry they made Him, had they known how much their disobedience was to make them suffer, they would never have fallen into their great sin—never. But they did fall. They did commit sin. Their sin was a very great sin; it was a mortal sin. You remember what I told you about mortal sin. Just think of it!

This was the first sin ever committed. It was the first sin God ever saw. Just see what He did when it came before His eyes. It is well always to remember this. As he treated this first mortal sin He may treat all mortal sins. In fact, as He

treated the sin of the angels, so will He deal with the mortal sins which they have done who die and come before Him without washing away those sins in the Sacrament of Penance. The angels were away above us. They were more perfect than we are. They were pure spirits. They had no bodies and so they could not die. God loves every creature He makes. He loves us, as you know, very, very much; but I feel that He loved the angels even more than He loves us. Think of this. Yet in spite of it, call to mind how terribly He punished them. What did He do to them on account of that one sin?

First they had no time to tell God how sorry they were for their bad deed. Perhaps they did have time to make an act of contrition, but they were too proud to make it. I like to think that He gave them a chance to become His friends again, but they did not wish to do so. Then His anger fell upon them. What happened? They were at once cast down into hell. He made hell on account of them. They were never to see Him again. He would never smile on them again. They were to be in darkness and pain and fire forever. Did you ever try to think of the meaning of that word "forever?" How many years is it since they were driven from His love? No one can tell. Suppose it was ten thousand years ago; suppose it was a hundred thousand years ago, or a million years. They have been in hell all that long, long time. They are there now while I am talking to you. All that dreary past does not count for anything. They are just as if they were only at the beginning of their great woe. And they are going to be there forever. That is, their suffering will never end. They are in darkness worse than that of the blackest kind you ever saw or any one will ever see, and no matter how far, in their grief, they look ahead, they will never see the sign of any

morning. Never, never, never. They will always be in the dark, always, always, always in the night. No moon, no stars in that blackness.

Why do I say so much about the angels who sinned? Because I want to make you understand what a terrible thing sin is, and how God hates it and how well you must prepare yourself for your Confession, so that, like God, you may hate sin more than anything else.

V.—PREPARING FOR CONFESSION.

I might tell you a good deal more about sin, but I think that what I have said of the harm it did the angels is enough to help you make up your minds that you will keep away from it all the days of your lives. We can never thank God enough for being so good as to give His Church that great Sacrament of Penance, in which every sin may be washed out and our souls made strong enough to fight against all our enemies. Once more you see the need of preparing yourself in the best way possible. I feel that at this moment you are, all of you, sure that you are going to do your best. What I have been so far trying to do for you is to make you hate sin, for I know if you hate it, either you will never fall into it, or if you do you will be very sorry for having done so. The first thing now necessary is that you must be sorry for all the sins you may have committed up to now. If when you go to Confession you are sorry, really sorry, that is, if you have contrition for your sins, then I have not the slightest doubt that you are going to make a good and a very good Confession.

I wish to talk to you now about the way in which you are always to prepare yourselves for this Sacrament. Sometimes on Confession days you will see boys and girls rushing into the church, kneeling down for a minute or so, and then, if there is a chance, running right into the confessional. You would certainly say that these children were not really ready to receive the grace of that Sacrament as they should. I wish to put you on your guard against this. I wish you right from your very first Confession to get into the way of doing things as you ought to. If there is anything you must do

with care it is the preparation, not only for your first, but for all your Confessions.

In this instruction I will speak to you about the way in which you are to go about getting ready. When you come into the church on the day fixed, kneel down and ask God, through the most Sacred Heart of Jesus, and through the Immaculate Heart of Mary, to give you the grace first to know all your sins and then to be sorry, very sorry, from the bottom of your heart, for all of them, even the smallest. That is the same as begging for the twofold favor of making a good examination of conscience and of making a very sincere act of contrition. This you must pray for every time you are about to confess. After this comes the examination of conscience. To examine your conscience means to look over all your thoughts, words and actions, to find out which were wrong and how many times they were wrong. Never forget that in Confession you must tell the priest not only what sins you committed, but also the number of times you were guilty of each offense.

There are many ways of examining your conscience, some of which I like and some of which I do not like at all, but which, on the contrary, I detest. You must not think that you have to read the questions which some prayer books have in their pages, in which they try to teach you how to prepare yourselves for the Sacrament. Take my advice and never use a prayer book for this purpose. You know that only that is a sin which is against any of the commandments of God or of the Church. So I would say that the easiest and the best way to examine your conscience is to take up the first commandment and ask yourselves whether knowingly and willingly you have ever done anything, or said anything, or even thought anything, against that commandment, and if so how many times. Do the same with

the second commandment, and all the other commandments of God, as well as with the first, second, third and fourth commandments of the Church.

There is another way which you might like as well or perhaps like better. You have duties all the time and everywhere. The only time when the commandments do not oblige you is when you are asleep. Otherwise, no matter where you are, you are always obliged to obey. This obligation to do as God's law bids is called your duty. You may therefore ask yourselves, Have you done your duty to everybody—to God, to your parents, to your companions, to your teachers, to all who are in any way your superiors? If not, how many times have you failed?

As you go along try to remember so that when you go into the confessional you will not keep the priest waiting. When you have examined your conscience, when you know what sins you have committed, and how many times, then do your best to be really sorry for them. There are many reasons why you should be sorry for your sins, and some of these reasons are better and stronger than others. You may regret having done a wrong act, because what you did was not nice and the thought of it makes you feel ashamed of yourselves. Or you may regret because you were found out and your parents or your teachers punished you, or your companions laughed at you or avoided you. Now to be sorry in that way, though it may help you a little to be better in the future, will be of no use in Confession. If that is the only kind of contrition you have, if you are sorry for no other reason, then, no matter what else you do, the forgiveness of the priest will not wipe out your sins. That sorrow is useless because it is being sorry, not for your sins but for yourselves.

Again, you may be sorry because you are afraid of God and of His punishments. You know that He is just and that He hates sin and will punish it as He will also reward virtue. There is hell for those who die in mortal sin, and there is heaven for those who die in the state of grace. If you regret having sinned because it put you in God's anger and in the danger of losing heaven and being condemned to hell, then this regret when it is felt in Confession will, with the absolution, remove all stain of guilt from your soul. But there is a better sorrow. I might call it the sorrow of grateful children who grieve that they have sinned because they have in that way offended God, who has done so much for them, who has given them so many favors, who made them so that they might live in happiness with Him forever, who has forgiven them so many times, who when they were lost by original sin brought them back to His friendship, who is protecting them every second of each hour, who made them members of His Church, who sent down His Son to die for every one of them, who has done so much in the past and is willing to do so much, even much more, in the future for them. If you weep over your sins for all this goodness of God then your sorrow is of the right kind and with it you will most certainly come from Confession with God's love in your souls and with every speck brushed away.

This last kind of contrition is real contrition. The first does not even deserve the name of contrition. The second is just barely contrition, but, remember this, because it is of a low degree of sorrow, it is called not contrition, but attrition.

There is a fourth degree of sorrow for sin. It is that sorrow which leaves ourselves out of sight altogether. It is that sorrow for sin on account of God Himself, because sin *has* offended One who is so

good in Himself, who ought to be revered and loved because He is the first and best of all beings, and deserves, without any fear of punishment or hope of reward, to be loved on account of what He is in Himself. Perhaps it is not easy to be sorry in this last manner, yet it is possible and it is this kind of contrition that we should always try to make ours, not only when we go to Confession, but every time we examine our conscience or in any other way think of our sins. This sorrow that I speak of now is so powerful that of itself, without going to Confession, it is mighty enough to free us from all our sins. It is so wonderful that if we were to die after making such an act of sorrow we would soon be face to face with God and forever. It is worth our while trying to be sorry in this way, and it is above all worth our while to ask God to give us this grace. The saints had it. There was nothing they hated as much as sin, because there was no one they loved as much as God, and they loved Him for Himself. What hatred of sin must have been theirs when they would suffer anything rather than offend God, rather suffer anything here or even in the world to come.

There was St. Francis de Sales, whose soul was on fire with the love of God to the degree that once, when the devil was tempting him to give up all hope of ever seeing God, he prayed that if he was going to be lost, at least he might be allowed to love God throughout his eternal separation from Him. He cared for God and God only and no matter where he was to be he wanted to love God. Such a love could make acts of perfect contrition only. The lives of the saints are full of such examples.

I find it out of my power to tell you how much of the fruit of your confession depends on your act of contrition. It is not necessary for you to *feel* sorry. What is necessary is to *be*

sorry, and you are sorry when you have made up your mind either through fear or through love of God never to commit sin again. Understand that nobody can make you commit sin in spite of yourself. Understand also, that if you will you can take a stand against all sin, and that forever. Yes, the grace of God is needed, but you may be sure of this one thing, that if you do all that you are able to do of yourself God will be at your side ready to help you.

So before going into Confession ask yourselves whether you are determined, through all difficulties, to keep away from every sin. Be sure of it, inasmuch as you can, and fight as hard as you can with yourself in order to force yourself to take that resolution. You might help yourself to that by looking at your sins, whatever they are, and asking yourselves a few questions about them. You might ask yourself are those things that you have to tell to the priest things to be proud of? Would you want the whole world to know about them? Yet God knows about them and perhaps your angel guardian saw you perform them. You might ask yourselves whether those sins did you any good at all in any way. Perhaps there was more trembling about them than pleasure, perhaps they left a bad taste behind them. I want you to think of anything that will enable you to see how foolish one is when one does wrong, so that for the future you will be on your guard against making a fool of yourself in this way.

Besides, what do you do every time you break a commandment? You offend God. And now ask yourselves what has God done against you that you should displease Him? Has He hurt you in any way? Rather has He not been good to you in every way? He has kept you alive, watched over you in a thou-

sand ways you know nothing about, protected you against the most terrible accidents and proved to you that He wishes you well. He has been goodness itself. And yet you would not obey Him. What was His desire when He ordered you to keep His commandments, when he forbade you to sin? Was He thinking only of Himself? Not at all, my dear children. He was thinking of you. He made those commandments in order that by keeping them you might make your lives beautiful, because it was better for you in this world to keep them than to break them, but chiefly because if you acted against them you would run the risk of never being happy with Him in eternity, but of being always unhappy.

The more you think the more clearly you will learn that there is nothing in sin worth the while, that you can not give one single good reason or excuse for your sinning. You will find, on the contrary, that in sinning you have been your own worst enemy, while God, in making it a law that you should avoid sin, has been your truest friend. And yet you have gone to work and almost despised this only real friend of yours, the One who was thinking of you and your happiness while you eat and drank and played, during the daytime and also during the night while you were asleep, the One who had you in His mind always, even when your parents did not even give a thought to your welfare.

The surest way of keeping out of sin is to be sorry for it in your heart. It is for this reason I have spent so much time talking to you about contrition. This is why in preparing yourself for Confession you should take more time in making yourselves sorry for your sins than in any other part of your preparation. You may be sure that if you do this your Confessions will make you better and better, until you will come so to hate sin that not all the temptations

in the world will be able to lead you away, even the breadth of a hair, from the road of the commandments.

As you get older and after you have been several times to Confession, you will now and then, perhaps often, notice that, in spite of all the grace that is contained in this wonderful Sacrament for which you are getting yourselves ready, you still commit the same sins and have the same faults to declare to the priest. This will not be a proof that you have made bad Confessions, but it will show you that though you have had some sorrow for sin, that though you have had enough sorrow to be pardoned, you have not had that great contrition of which I have been speaking, and hence have not got all the profit from the Sacrament which God wishes to give you through it. God, your Father, who is in heaven, not only desires to pardon you all you have done against Him, but He is so good that He is anxious to keep you in His favor always. He does not want you to be for one minute outside His friendship. He loves you so much that He is working all the time to hold you by His side, or rather in His arms. When, therefore, you are asking Him for the grace of a good Confession beg of Him to make your sorrow for your wrong-doing so great that nothing under the sun, nothing, will ever change your firm purpose of never offending Him.

VI.—ON BAD CONFESSION.

You see, my dear boys and girls, that I say the same thing over and over again; and I do it because at your young age, unless you hear a thing more than once, there is danger that you will let it drop from your minds entirely. This last would be a very great evil in things which are necessary or useful for making you good children, first, and afterwards good men and good women. There are some things which are not so necessary and if you forget them it really does not make much, if any, difference. There are other things which you must always remember. A great deal of harm might happen to you if you lost sight of them.

I think that somewhere in your Catechism, the question is asked, what are the four last things to be remembered? Some children think that the question means: What four things are we to remember last? as if they were four things that we need not think of until we have thought of everything else. But the question means what are the four *last* things which we must never forget? Now, as you know, these things are: Death, judgment, heaven, hell. They are the four things which must happen last to every man. They must not be lost sight of. When one stops remembering, that is thinking, that he is going to die, that he is going to be judged, that there is a hell for him to escape and a heaven for him to win, there is great danger that he will not be on his guard, that he will be overtaken by sin and that he will die before he has been pardoned or sorry for his sin and thus will be lost forever. The only way for one not to forget these things is to hear about them often. So, to come back to what I began with, you understand why I tell you so often the same thing. It may tire you, but I do not wish you to forget.

In this instruction we will try to understand what it is to make a bad Confession. Do you know, my dear children, any words that look so wicked as the words "bad Confession?" Are they not words that frighten you? Do they not seem to mean something awful, something terrible? That is the way they look and sound to me. There are other words also which when they are spoken make one shudder. These are the words bad, or which is the same thing, sacrilegious Communion. Then there is another word which is worse than either of the words we have been thinking of. That word is "*Depart from me.*" It is what Christ is going to say on the day of judgment, on the last day, to those whom, on account of their sins, He can not admit to heaven and whom He must drive away from Him and send to hell, where they will not look on His beautiful face forever. Now in a way these three words are almost the same. Why? Because a bad Confession leads to a bad Communion and a bad Communion is such a great sin, so heinous, that is, so insulting to God's sanctity and to God's grace, that it is certainly opening the door that looks out on the path that leads to hell.

When the devil beholds any one going to Communion knowingly in the state of sin, he begins to feel that sooner or later that guilty one will fall into the dark and dreary and wretched and pitiless empire of which he is the ruler.

I have asked you during these days to pray for many things, but I beg you to pray most earnestly never to make a bad Confession or Communion. I have asked you to make many resolutions, but I beseech you, let your strongest resolution be rather to die than commit the sin of a bad Confession or a bad Communion. You know that you make a bad Confession only when you hide willingly a sin that you are obliged to tell.

Here I will ask you a question. What sins must you tell in Con-

fession in order that your Confession may be as it should be? You *must* tell in Confession all your mortal sins. Does the law make it necessary for you to reveal to the priest any other of your sins? No. Understand that in Confession you *need* tell your mortal sins alone. Less grievous faults you are not called upon to make known. However, let me give this piece of advice. Get into the way of making all your sins known. It will bring you more grace, that is, you will find that God will come more quickly to your help. His blessings will be more numerous. Besides, it will prove that you wish to have nothing at all to do with sin, be it small or great, which is the best frame of mind for you to be in when you approach the Sacrament of Penance. Still I must put things to you as they are. Unless you wilfully, that is, knowing what you are doing, keep back a mortal sin your Confession is not bad. I say your Confession is not bad if you are really sorry, that is, sorry in the way I have been explaining to you all along, for the sins you have told.

Now there are more ways than one of making a bad Confession. Do you know that there are no two words joined together that seem to me to have a more shocking sound than those two I have been using so much in this instruction—bad Confession. Yes, there is another couple of words which have a more fearful sound. I mean the two words “bad Communion.” When we think what a beautiful thing Confession is, and what a grand thing Communion is we easily understand that to make either of them a bad thing must mean a great accident for the one who is guilty enough to do so.

If you are not sorry for your sins when you tell them to the priest in Confession, if you are not grieved for every one of them without exception, then your Confession is worth nothing. I am speaking, as you know, of *mortal* sins. You will remember what I

have said about sorrow, or about contrition, which is the same thing. You are not obliged to feel it as you would some hurt or some pain. The best proof that you are really sorry is that you really wish that you had not done any of the things you are making known to your confessor, that you wish this not because somebody—your friends or your parents—has found you out, or because some other damage has happened to you, something you do not like or something that makes you uneasy, but you wish the fault had never been yours because it put you in danger of being lost forever, because it put you in danger of never reaching heaven, or because it displeased God. These last reasons for being sorry make up a very good act of contrition.

Another proof of a real worthy contrition is that you have made up your mind that never, however much you may be tempted, never will you offend God again. Suppose you told, let me say, ten sins in Confession and you meant never to do those wrong things again, all ten of them, then you are all right. But suppose you said to yourself: I will not commit nine of those sins any more, but there is the tenth and I have been guilty of it so often that I intend to do it all over again, then your Confession would be a bad one, and though you were really sorry for the nine others you are not forgiven any one of them because you have no contrition for that awful tenth mortal sin, whatever it may be.

Why will not God forgive you the nine others? I will try to explain this to you. Sin is a thought or a word or an act which offends God. Sin is a sin only because it offends God and makes the sinner an enemy of God. Suppose you have committed ten sins and you are sorry for nine only, the tenth sin still keeps you an enemy of God; not only keeps you an enemy, but of your own free will, by that sin for which you have no regret

and which you mean to be guilty of again when you have the temptation or a chance, you wish to continue an enemy of God. You see that by this act of yours you simply say to the Lord that you do not wish to be His friend. How can He, when you behave like this, forgive any of your faults? It is not hard for you to understand that if you have not real sorrow for every one of your sins your Confession is worth nothing, is a bad Confession.

Another reason why a Confession may be bad is because the boy or girl does not tell the priest *every* sin. If this happens because you forget then it is not a bad Confession. But if this happens because you are afraid or ashamed, if through fear or shame you hold back a mortal sin, then your Confession is a bad Confession. Always remember that your Confession in this case can not be bad unless the sin you hide is a mortal sin. I will repeat that in Confession the only sins you must tell are your mortal ones.

What about your venial sins? *Must* you tell them to your Confessor? No, you are not obliged in conscience to do so. Is it well to do so? Yes, indeed it is. Another time I will explain to you how you may get rid of venial sins without going to Confession, but let me say just now the surest way to receive pardon for them is to tell them in the Sacrament of Penance and get absolution for them.

For the most part children, and older people, make bad Confessions because they are either afraid or ashamed to tell certain sins by which they have broken the law of God. Now, my dear children, what is it that makes you afraid? Do you stand in fear of the priest? If so, why? He is not going to harm you in any way. You say, but if I tell him *that*, he is going to give me an awful scolding. First, the priest does not always scold, secondly, there are some priests who never scold. You must remember that you are always

free to choose whatever confessor you please. You are never obliged to go to any one priest. This you must never forget. You all have your "likes and dislikes." It is only natural. Therefore make your Confession to whatsoever priest you please. If you think that such a Father is easier than another go to the one who is the easier of the two.

Now, let me suppose that the priest is going to scold you on account of the sins or some special sin that you committed and which you must tell him. Suppose he is going to give you a very severe scolding. Let me ask you, do you not deserve it? You know that were you to die in the state of mortal sin you would be lost forever. Now what is a scolding compared with an eternity of suffering? Eternity never ends and this scolding you are so much in dread of will be gone and forgotten in a very short time. Not only it will pass as all things pass, but it will, I am sure, do you much good. The greatest good it can do you is to make you sorry for your sins and perhaps it may prevent you from ever falling into that sin again. Now what is a scolding? It is finding fault with you in harsh words and in severe tones. That is all. You may feel it very much. So much the better. Anything is preferable to having God angry with you and obliged to tell you to go away from Him forever.

So, my dear children, be sensible. If you are going to be scolded, as you call it, if the priest is very angry, bear with it and take it all as a little bit of penance for the sins of which you may be guilty. You will always find that the greater your sins are the gladder the priest will be to see you in Confession and the kinder will be his treatment of you. You must always bear in mind that the priest in the confessional is there in the place of Christ and has all Christ's power. You may be sure that he will always welcome you, that he will remember how Christ, whose place he holds, has been impatient

to have you come and in a humble way tell your sins and have them forgiven.

Yes, Christ has been waiting for you to come to Him and be His friend again, and have your souls made white and go and sin no more. Drive, therefore, out of your head the thought that the priest is going to be hard with you. He will talk seriously to you, he will advise you and caution you and tell you what you must do not to fall into those wrong doings in the days to come.

So you see you must go into the confessional without any fear. You must look upon the confessor as your best friend. He has no wish to hurt you. His only desire is to make you hate all that is bad and love all that is good. He has only one thing in view and that is to fill your souls with the love of God and to make you fear more than anything else to offend God, and to make you more afraid to commit sin than to have the worst thing, even death itself, happen to you. Knowing all this, what is there that should make you dread going to Confession? On the contrary, is there not everything to make you happy and thank God for having the chance to wipe out every wrong thought, wrong word, wrong act and then to look up into the face of your Lord and see not a frown, but only the sweetest of all smiles to show you how pleased He is to have you once more as His child whom He loves and who loves Him?

There is another cause, as I told you already in this instruction, there is another cause of bad confessions. That cause is shame. You are ashamed to let the priest know that you have been guilty of this or that sin. I made little of the fear that some have of confessing their sins. I make just as little of your being ashamed. You are ashamed of the priest, you blush because of the priest. You say to yourself: What will the priest think of me? He is going to think poorly of me, he is going to have a bad, a low opinion of me.

He is not going to do anything of the kind. He knows how strong the devil is and how weak you are. He is sure that there is nothing too shameful for a poor child to do when that child forgets God and does not ask Him for help. And you never think of God knowing all your thoughts? You never think that you cannot conceal anything from Him? You are ashamed of the priest who after all is only a man, and you are not ashamed of God? This is really a big mistake. Why were you not ashamed in the beginning to commit this sin which you do not wish the priest to hear? Be not ashamed to lay open your conscience to the confessor. The shame you feel will be part of your penance.

If there is any guilt of yours which you think you cannot bear to confess, the best thing to do is to tell the priest that there is another sin or other sins you have not the courage to tell. He will understand. He will put you a few questions and in a minute the whole trouble will be over. Do not leave the church to-day without promising to God that no matter what you may do you will not hide a sin in Confession.

Thus all your confessions will be good ones and you will grow better and better every day of your lives.

VII.—SATISFACTION.

We have come to the last instruction of this retreat which you have been making in order to prepare yourselves for receiving all the blessings of the great Sacrament of Penance. During these talks of mine I have simply explained every word of the definition which you find in your Catechism and which you have learned by heart. I told you that it was a Sacrament and therefore instituted by Christ. He gave us this Sacrament so that whenever we fell into sin after Baptism we could get cleansed from that sin and once more enjoy His friendship. It is called the Sacrament of Penance because the word Penance means pain or sorrow for having offended God. I told you that sin was the wilful breaking of the law of God. I tried to make you understand that sin is the worst evil which can happen to you here on this earth. I spoke of the different kinds of sin, of original, of actual, of mortal, and of venial sin. We talked of the kind of sorrow which we should have for all our sins. It was not any kind of sorrow, but a grief for sin because it either put you in danger of never seeing God or, which is better, because you have offended God whom you wish to love above everybody and everything else.

If you are prepared when you go to Confession, that is, if you tell all your sins of thought, or word, or deed and tell them with the sorrow of which I have just spoken to you, then your sins will be forgiven. In other words, if you do not make a bad Confession (and you know when a Confession is bad), then as soon as the priest gives you absolution all your faults are wiped out and it depends entirely on you never to sin again and always to walk in the sunshine of God's love, which is something worth more than anything, or all things, in this world.

In all my talks to you what have I done? I have only taken what you find in your Catechism as the definition of this Sacrament for which you are getting ready, and told you as fully as I could the meaning of each word. I would like to say right here that there is one thing you must pay attention to, not only now, but during all the time you go to Sunday school. That one thing is: Always learn your Catechism lesson so well by heart that it will be impossible for any one to make you stumble while you recite it. It may be that sometimes you will not understand the meaning of some of the words. Never mind, for as you grow older the meaning of these things will be clear and not only you will know what you should believe and do, but also you will be able to tell others what the right thing is and in the proper words.

I am sure you will always be able to put in the correct language for yourselves and others what your Church calls the Sacrament of Penance. You will know that it is a Sacrament, but it has certain signs which anybody can see and which show what it does for your souls. The one who goes to Confession gives a sign that he has turned away from sin and the priest by his words and actions gives us to understand that he is with the power given him by God, through Christ, pardoning the sins which are told him by the sinner who is sorry for his sins.

In your Catechism there are three Sacraments, out of the seven mentioned, before that of Penance. Those three Sacraments are Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist. About these two last Sacraments you will hear a good deal when in a few years from now you are advanced to the class of those who are preparing to receive those two great Sacraments. These Sacraments are entirely different, the one from the other, but they are like each other in this that they were instituted by Christ and they give grace to our souls.

Baptism and Confirmation are alike in this that neither of them can be received more than once. You cannot be baptized or confirmed twice. But you may go to Confession and Communion frequently.

How often should you go to Confession? It is best to follow in this the regulations of your parish and I think that according to them the pastor calls all his children who have not made their first Communion to go to Confession at least four times a year, generally during the Ember Days. If you want a rule for your whole life I would say the oftener you go the better. You remember that there is no limit to the mercy of God. Peter once asked Our Lord if sin might be forgiven seven times and Our Lord answered: "I say, not seven times, but seventy times seven" (Matt. 18). I would ask you to go to Confession as soon as possible in case you fall into mortal sin. It is very dangerous to remain even a few seconds in that state. Suppose you were to die with that sin on your soul what would become of you? Your faith teaches you that you would be lost forever. You know how uncertain life is. It does not take a second to die and you might drop dead at any moment. Boys and girls think that sudden deaths happen to grown people only. Many, many children have died suddenly.

Sometimes it may be impossible for you to get to the priest. The church may be far away or there may be other reasons. If you have to wait days, or, as sometimes happens, weeks and even months before you can go to Confession, there is one way to protect yourself against the awful fate of being with the damned forever. That one way is to make as hearty an act of contrition as it is in your power to make. I told you of one kind of contrition which is so powerful that by it, even without Confession, you will be forgiven your sin

Do your best to make such an act and with prayer you will succeed in doing so.

You see I have come again to talk of sin and immediately I think of the awful evils it brings about. The only thing that can surely save you from it is Confession frequently and properly made and after Confession comes prayer and that form of prayer especially which is called the Act of Contrition. As I have told you there is a certain Act of Contrition which joined with Confession will get for you pardon for your sins—that contrition is called attrition.

St. Alphonsus, who was the founder of the great Redemptorist order, puts in the following words that kind of contrition of which I have just been speaking and which I might call an Act of Attrition: *"My God, because by my sins I have lost heaven and deserved hell for eternity, I am sorry above all things for having offended Thee and I firmly purpose never more to offend Thee by a mortal sin."* These words show that you are really sorry for sin, but only for the reason that your sin might be and could have been the cause of everlasting injury to you. Such an act made in Confession would have been enough to rid you of all the sins you told to the priest. Without, that is, outside of the Sacrament, it would have been of little benefit to you.

There is another Act of Contrition. If you make it sincerely, that is, from the bottom of your heart, even outside of Confession, it will gain for you the pardon of all your sins. It is certainly worth your while to learn to make this act, for it is so pleasing in the eyes of God that were you to die after it you could not be lost, you would find yourselves in presence of your judge without a mortal sin on your soul and so the sentence that He would pronounce would be altogether in your favor. This Act of Contrition which, when made honestly and meaning every word of it, can do so much for your

soul, even outside of Confession, I will give you also in the words of St. Alphonsus Liguori. You remember that I said the saints always made this perfect act of sorrow, at least they were ever striving to make it and were ever praying for the grace to make it. We learn that St. Margaret of Cortona spent the remainder of her life, after her conversion, in shedding tears of such real grief for her sins that it was told her by a messenger from heaven that God was "so touched by her sorrow that every one of her faults, no matter how grievous they had been, was so entirely blotted out that her soul had become as white as it was the day she was baptized." Yes, the saints so understood the value of this great grace, that they preferred to make one such Act of Contrition, rather than be made masters of the whole world. This is the act as made by St. Alphonsus: "*My God, because Thou art infinitely good, I love Thee above all things, and because I love Thee, I am sorry above all things for the offenses I have committed against Thee, O Sovereign Good. My God, I resolve never more to offend Thee. I wish to die rather than offend Thee again by mortal sin.*"

You see all that is meant in that Act of Contrition. It is not necessary to use the words I have just repeated. Any words meaning the same thing will do as well. It is very useful to have some fixed set of words. The words that you find in your Catechism are just as good as the words of the saint. I wished simply to put before you the way which a saint thinks is the right way to make this wonderful act of sorrow. I would beg of you to try to make this act any time you may have—which God forbid—the misfortune to commit a grievous sin. I advise you to make it every night before you go to bed. I advise you to make it in moments of danger and I know God will give you the grace to make it on your deathbed. It must not be forgotten that when you make this act in the state of

mortal sin you must have the desire and the intention of going to Confession as soon as you can.

Your Catechism says that the Sacrament of Penance is made up of three parts: Confession, Contrition and Satisfaction. I must say a few words about Satisfaction. Satisfaction means that which the penitent, i. e. the one who goes to Confession, must do himself, in order to make up to God for his sins. This "*making up*" is necessary. Hence the priest obliges you, when you have confessed, to say some prayers or to do something as penance for your sins. When sins are forgiven there is no longer any eternal punishment to be suffered, but there remains something for the sinner to endure. The enduring of that something is called Satisfaction or Penance.

So you must when you have told all your sins pay attention to every word the priest says. He will tell you how you will be able to avoid those sins of yours in the future, he will give you some advice, and, above all, he will give you some penance to perform. Do not miss a word your confessor says. He is speaking to you in the name of the Great High Priest Jesus Christ, and his words will do you very much good. Above all be sure you understand what he tells you to do for penance or what he tells you to say. If you are not sure do not hesitate to ask him to please repeat for you. Be very childlike with your confessor in all things and in this matter of penance as well as in everything else.

Lest I forget it I will mention here something that it is very necessary for you to know and remember. In the beginning of our retreat, or perhaps a little later, I gave you the reasons why you should never yield to the temptation to hide a sin in Confession. I explained to you that if the penitent wilfully neglects to mention a sin or sins which should be confessed, or tells a lie about any serious sin, he not only does not obtain the pardon of his sins, but makes

himself guilty of a greater sin, he makes himself guilty of a bad Confession, in other words he commits a sacrilege. In fact, what he has done can not be called Confession and he must repeat his Confession besides accusing himself of having concealed a mortal sin from the priest through fear or through false shame, or through any other cause.

I gave you before some reasons why you should not be afraid or ashamed to tell your sins. I will give one more reason, which is that you remember that unless you tell upon yourself, nobody in this world outside the priest, will ever know what you made known in Confession. Your sins are buried forever and your Confession will never bring you into trouble or difficulty of any kind, for the priest is commanded by the Church "to take especial care, neither by word nor sign nor by any means whatever to allow, even in the least degree, any one to know what has been confessed to him in the Sacrament of Penance." No laws, no threats, no punishment will force any priest to break this law. Many confessors have suffered tortures, imprisonment and even death rather than be unfaithful to their trust. The more then you think, the more you will be able to understand, that really one of the silliest things a boy or girl can do, is to keep back a mortal sin in confession.

You see I have said mortal sin because not to tell a venial sin in the Sacrament would not make your Confession bad.

After leaving the priest the first thing you should do is to kneel down and thank God for the great gift He has bestowed upon you. When you have made that act of thanksgiving, then perform your penance, that is, say whatever prayers your confessor has given you to say by way of Satisfaction. Do not get into the habit of putting your penance off. There is danger of your forgetting if you delay and you must remember that the performing of that penance, that is,

the doing what the priest told you in Confession; is an absolutely necessary part of the Sacrament. This your Catechism tells you.

There is much more which I might speak of regarding Confession, but you have heard enough to understand what Confession is, how to make a good Confession, and, above all, enough has been told you to fix in your mind one purpose and that is the purpose of never running the risk of falling into the awful sin of sacrilegious Confession.

Some three or four years from now, or perhaps sooner, when you are preparing for your first Communion and while that time is approaching, during Catechism classes, which you must never be absent from without a very good reason, you will hear still more about the Sacrament of Penance.

In the year 1726, a child was born who when he grew up became a Redemptorist. He is now Saint Gerard Majella and the patron of a good Confession. He gives courage to souls who are in danger of being overcome by fear and shame. He obtains true sorrow for those who invoke him. Therefore go to him, my dear children, every time you are getting ready for Confession, and be sure that helped by him your Confessions will always be what God wishes them. Especially beg of him that your first Confession be a perfect one.

Now, my good boys and girls, I wish you every blessing, but just now the greatest gift I can ask for you is the grace of a very good first Confession.

II. A RETREAT BEFORE FIRST HOLY COMMUNION.

I.—INTRODUCTORY.

Some three or four years ago, you made a short retreat in which through prayer and instruction you prepared for your first Confession. I remember how well you made that little retreat and how sure I felt that you were going to make your Confession in such a perfect manner that you would never forget it as long as you lived. Now I want you to do just the same these days as you did in those days I speak of. Besides the boys and girls who were here at that time there are some who have joined the Communion Class recently. Moreover not all the children who were here then are here now. Some have moved away and some have left this world and I hope are happy with the angels in heaven and owe their great gladness forever with the saints to the fact that their first Confession was nearly everything God wished it to be, and taught them how to make their last Confession in such a way as to render it possible for them to appear without fear in the presence of Him who judged them the very moment their souls left their bodies.

Why should you make this retreat well? There are many reasons and all of them good. In the first place, when you think of the Sacrament you are going to partake of you will readily understand that no preparation, however lengthy, is long enough. I do not exaggerate when I say that if you spent years or even eternity in fitting yourselves, you would not, because you could not, be worthy of one Holy Communion. You will believe this when you try to realize what He is who comes to you and what you are who receive Him. What a difference! What an enormous distance He is

from you in every way! It is impossible for any one to bridge over the space which separates you from Him.

Again, you are going in the future to receive your Lord so many times, and an hour is going to come when you will receive Him for the last time. Who can tell how many Communion's there are going to be between this one you are going to make in a few days and your last? All these other Communion's will depend a great deal on your first, and on your Communion's will depend the kind of life you are going to lead and also will depend your death-bed Communion.

I said there were many reasons and there are, but the two I have just given are enough to determine you to resolve that you will strive with all your strength to prepare yourselves for the great day which will soon be here. Many, and among them the first Napoleon, have always considered that day as the happiest of their whole lives. You are, I am sure, thinking of the clothes you are going to wear on that day, you are thinking of your ribbons and your veils. You do well because Solomon in all his glory was not becomingly arrayed to be admitted into the presence of the King of kings. But there is one dress the Lord will look for without fail on that day. It will please Him, of course, to notice how out of respect for Him you wear the best it is your power to procure, but He will in a very special manner look to see what the condition of your soul is, whether it is clothed in the white robes of innocence, whether it is wearing the wreath made up of the flowers of humility and whether over all is the veil of purity and modesty. Sometimes children are not rich, their parents cannot afford to put rich garments upon them, but every child is wealthy enough to get for himself the clothes of the soul which you know are made up of all the beautiful virtues which grow in your life when you are heedful of the com-

mandments of God. Every one can kneel before Christ on the first Communion day with these robes upon him. Your parents will see to it that you are properly attired. Besides praying for you, that is all they can do. It is entirely your own affair, entirely yours and nobody else's to put on your soul the things which are going to make it beautiful in the eyes of the Lord, and the purpose of this retreat is to help you so prepare your souls that your Redeemer, your Master, your King will be delighted to come and take up His home in them.

Remember therefore what you are in retreat for. You are getting ready to receive the Lord. You must have noticed how this big city does when it is going to welcome some distinguished man. The streets are swept clean, the houses are decorated and all along the road which he is going to pass there are signs in the faces of the people who line the sidewalks, signs everywhere that the city is glad to have him as its guest and is anxious to appear at its best when the great individual arrives and while he stays in its midst. Now apply that to yourselves. Whom are you going to greet? Who is He? What is anybody compared with Him, millionaires, kings, emperors? Nobody, you know well, deserves the reception Christ should get from you. Therefore you are going to have everything in your souls as splendid as you can make it. The avenues will be free from all encumbrances, all that is unsightly, that is, no matter where your dear Lord looks up and down your soul, He will find nothing which offends Him, no thought, no word, no deed which displeases Him, in a word, no sin, not even the smallest. You are going to adorn your soul with acts of contrition, of determination, with promises which you are, in spite of every temptation, going to keep, promises to remain on the road of His law, promises to be faithful to everything your religion teaches you, to every one of

its practices, promises to be good children at home, good children at school, good children at play and good children everywhere. If you do this then when you are going through the exercises of this retreat, if you keep your mind fixed upon one purpose of appearing at your best on the day when our Lord gives Himself to you for the first time I have not the slightest doubt that He will bestow upon you the choicest blessings, that is, He will enable you to be strong against all the temptations you will have to meet in life and thus make you, from good Catholic boys and girls, good Catholic men and women.

During these hours of preparation you must think and pray. Especially must you think. A great deal of sin is committed because people do not think. How often when you examine your conscience and discover something on your souls more serious than usual you say to yourself, What was I thinking of when I did that? and you are obliged to answer your own question and reply that you were not thinking at all. Therefore think seriously during this retreat and also pray, but let me tell you that you will not pray well unless you think well. You know what prayer is and how powerful it is. It can do anything. See what it did for the people mentioned in the Old and New Testament. It urged our Lord to perform miracles. It will do the same thing for you but it must be earnest prayer. It must come from the heart. You must desire what you wish God to give you. So, think and pray fervently. If you think seriously about your first Communion you will pray as you never prayed before, you will pray for the grace of making your first Communion as it is intended by God and your Mother the Church, you should make it.

What I am going to say to you in these instructions about the Blessed Eucharist has only this end in view, which is to make you

prize this privilege of yours so highly that there is nothing you will not do to receive it in the best spirit. There is no better way of learning to put the real value on a privilege than by endeavoring to understand just what the privilege is, what they lose who receive it not, and what they gain upon whom it is bestowed. In the first place, what you are preparing for is a Sacrament. It is not my intention to repeat except in a very general way what is meant by a Sacrament. I will ask you to study the meaning of every word which you find in the definition as you learned it in your catechism.

There are three ideas which you must keep fixed in your minds, because these three ideas make up the perfect idea of a Sacrament. The three ideas are, first, that a Sacrament is a sign, second, that it gives grace, third, that it was instituted by Christ.

What is the Sacrament of the Eucharist the sign of? It is a sign of food, of nourishment—a sign of the life that is kept in our soul—a sign of the strength that is given to our soul and without which the soul would grow weak and become diseased and die. This sign is a sacred one because it has been made holy by the touch of God. What material food, the food which you can see and touch and take is to the body, that is the Sacrament of the Eucharist to the soul. The body can not do without its food, neither can the soul do without its proper nourishment.

This sign was instituted by Christ the very night before He died.

The grace that it gives is the strength to live the life that Christ came down from heaven to teach us to live. The Sacraments are beautiful and consoling things and they are so wonderfully related to each other and all of them are so necessary for man. Baptism gives us our birth into the Church. It reveals to us that we were born in original sin, that in the beginning God created our first parents without sin. Their sin brought so many curses upon us.

That sin is washed away in the waters of Baptism and we go back from the Church to our mothers' arms no longer children of sin, but children made sinless, made members of the Church and children of God and heirs of salvation and placed upon the road that leads to heaven. We grow and at last become conscious of ourselves and learn that we must do what is right and must not do what is wrong. Alas! in other words we grow able to commit sin. The Sacrament of Baptism cleansed us from our first sin; is there any Sacrament which can purify us from the sin we commit ourselves, with our eyes open, knowing full well what we are about? If there were not, what would become of us? Where would we go? What could we do? We would fall into despair, we would continue to live and keep on sinning with the dreadful knowledge that after death we would never see God; but God is always ready to pardon us and therefore did Christ institute that other Sacrament in which we may obtain forgiveness for sins committed after Baptism and that other Sacrament, as you know, is the Sacrament of Penance. But it is not enough to be made white, we wish to remain white. This supposes strength or rather grace to be strong against temptation—in other words our souls want food—not the food of this earth, but food from heaven—and that food is to be found in the Sacrament of the Altar.

Listen to an old writer, he was not a priest but a nobleman, a man of the world. He was not a saint, in fact the earlier years of his life he spent away from God. His words are so full of beauty and faith that I am sure you will be glad to hear them: "Generally, it is at the age of twelve and in the spring time of the year that the young soul is united to its Maker. After having wept over the death of the Redeemer of the world as wept the mountains of Sion, after having recalled the darkness that covered the earth, the

Church rises from the ashes of her grief, bells ring, organs play and beneath the domes of all the temples is heard a cry of joy, the antique Alleluia of Abraham and Jacob. Young souls in white robes and boys in holiday attire advance in procession over paths strewn with flowers—they march toward the Church, singing joyous canticles, their parents follow them. In a little while Christ descends upon the altar to refresh these delicate souls. The food of angels is placed upon their pure lips and through the veins of priest and children runs the precious blood of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. In this festival—for the day of first Communion is indeed a high festival—there is the peaceful sign of a bloody Sacrifice.”

Now I will give some words from the pen of a man who, Catholic in his young years, became a fierce hater of his faith, of Christ, of God. “Behold these men who receive God within them, in the midst of an august ceremony, under the light of a thousand candles, with music enchanting their senses, at the foot of an altar dazzling with gold. The imagination is subdued, the soul seized and melting, one hardly breathes, but is detached from every earthly good, is united with God who becomes part of one’s flesh and one’s blood. Who would dare, who would find it possible after that to think ever of doing wrong? No doubt it is impossible to fancy a mystery more powerful to keep man in the ways of virtue.”

My dear children, if I used those words I am afraid you might think I was guilty of exaggeration. I may tell you that no Sacrament among the seven is there about which such wonderful things have been said, not by good Catholics only, but by bad and worldly men, men who had given up their religion altogether.

You will notice that this Sacrament has many names. It is called the Most Blessed Sacrament because it is the most blessed thing we

have in our Church and because it holds in itself so many blessed things for young and old who love it. It is called the "Sacrament of the Altar" because it is on the altar that Christ descends at the word of the priest, before He goes down to meet you and make Himself your food. It is the "Sacrament of the Altar" because the altar is a resting place for our Lord, where He waits all day and all night long, ever ready to hasten to our assistance in moments of grievous sickness and especially at the hour of death. In your catechism it is called in the list of Sacraments "the Holy Eucharist," which means that it is a Sacrament by which God is given thanks for His innumerable favors and by which atonement or satisfaction as well as praise are rendered to God. It is likewise called "Communion" because when you receive the Blessed Sacrament you enter into close union with Christ whose flesh becomes part of your flesh and whose blood is made part of your blood. It has a host of names given to it by the saints and the lovers of the Sacred Heart. Those names I have called your attention to, are those most frequently used.

I wish, beloved children, to impress upon your young minds that this marvellous Sacrament is everything to you, that God is offering you the chance to prepare for it, is showing you a love which you may not understand now but which you will appreciate as you get on in years and especially in your hours of trouble and in the moment of death. Let us ask God through the Sacred Heart for the grace to appreciate how much Holy Communion means to us.

II.—REASON AND CONSCIENCE, TWO SAFEGUARDS.

I noticed, my dear children, that you listened very attentively to everything I said in my last instruction. In that instruction I gave you some reasons why you should make this little retreat well. The reasons I presented were to every Catholic boy and girl so strong that I have not the least doubt that if kept in mind they will help you very much to do all in your power, that is, all you can, to be ready when the great day dawns. Now just for a very few moments I am going to say a word about “reasons.”

You hear the word “reason” or “reasons” frequently every day. Your parents, your companions, your teachers and your priest are constantly making use of it. You use it yourself not seldom. Now what does it mean? If you do not use the word itself you hint at it whenever you ask your mother or your father or your brothers or your sisters or your playmates the question “Why?” I am sure you would not be able to count the exact number of times you have said to somebody or other “Why.” When you ask “Why” what do you ask? You wish to know the reason on account of which such a word is said, or such an act is done. If your teacher accuses you, or your father or mother scolds you, or a boy or a girl jostles you or makes a remark, or in any way hurts you, you always desire to know and you nearly always ask why. In other words you are impatient to know why and you expect them to answer, and if their answer does not satisfy you you ask and you ask again. This is only natural. You must remember that you are not little animals, but you are human beings and the great difference between an animal, say a dog or a cat or a horse and you, is that they cannot give a reason for what they do and a boy or girl can. However, sometimes a boy or a girl cannot give a reason either, because they

have no reasons to give or because they are so young, so near the days of the cradle and the nurse that their minds are asleep and therefore unable to work. When I say that the mind is not able to work, I mean that the mind is not capable of reasoning, that is, it cannot give a reason why it does this or does that, does not do this or does not do that; in other words, it does not understand the full and real meaning of things and therefore is not guilty when an action is performed, that is, an action which God forbids and punishes.

This will be clear to you when you recall that you are not obliged to go to Confession until you are seven years old, because before that time you do not understand and cannot make use of your reason. When you reach that time of life, when you begin to know what is wrong and what is right and to be aware that you must do what is right, and must not do what is wrong, then it is in your power to commit sin and it is just at that point of your existence that the Church says you are obliged to go to Confession.

Perhaps you have not forgotten what you were taught some four or five years ago when you were preparing for your first Confession. You will probably remember that you were told that you could not or rather that you did not commit a sin, unless you knew that what you were doing was a sin, and knowing it was a sin, you did it willingly. All that signified, that it was impossible to fall into sin unless you had your reason, unless you were able to make use of your reason and thus pronounce judgment on yourselves and what you said, thought or did.

Your reason, which is your power of judging, is a great gift of God. It is a light which He has placed in your souls which sheds its rays on the road which you must travel. By it the path of salvation is so clear that you cannot mistake it so that if you travel out-

side of it and lose yourselves you and you only are to blame. God in giving us our reason and helping our weak wills with His grace has done all He could for us. There is one other thing I wish to tell you about your reason and it is very important and I hope I shall be able to make it plain to you.

Your reason is your guide. It is a kind of an angel guardian to you. It always points the way in which you should walk. If it is your guide, you are safe when you follow its direction and you are in danger when you refuse to be advised by it. Hence I warn you always listen to reason. Be ever careful to put your feet where it beckons. In yourselves, there is and there will be until you die, other leaders besides your reason. They will endeavor with all their might—and they are very strong—they will do their best to make you destroy your reason. Those powers which I speak of and which have their home in every boy and every girl, in every man and every woman, are your passions. Those passions will fill you with desires against your reason, they will whip and lash you in a direction contrary to that which is shown to you by your reason. They will try to drive you to be angry, covetous, uncharitable, slothful, impure, dishonest, disobedient, and selfish and mean in every way. They will raise up a storm in your whole being. They will try to change the strength of your will, to make it go against God and every one of His commandments.

What are you to do in this great hurricane of your soul? Look up to the light of your reason. Do not be led by your feelings—follow your reason. It will show you the path of safety. If the feelings grow more and more violent, as sometimes, yes, and as very often they do, if your will is becoming weak, still keep your eye on the shining of reason and while your eyes are lifted up to it, down on your knees, and pray for help and soon the storm will be

over and when everything is quiet you will find yourselves in the midst of a great peace, and with the light of reason falling all about you, and the approval of your conscience, which is the smile of God, comforting and refreshing you.

So make it one of the resolutions of your retreat that with God's grace helping you, you will be guided not by feeling, but in all things by your reason and your reason only. Sometimes your reasoning may be wrong. What must you do then?

This leads me to say something about conscience. What is conscience? Everybody has a conscience. In some, as in babies and very young children, as well as in idiots, this conscience is unable to act and hence they cannot be held accountable for anything they do. They cannot commit sin, and so no matter what their actions are, they will not be punished by God. You all have your consciences and they are able to do the work for you which it is intended by the Almighty they should do. You examine those consciences of yours whenever you prepare for Confession. You examine, that is, you look into your consciences in order to find out the sins of which you have rendered yourselves guilty since your last Confession. Your consciences when you take them to task tell you all your good as well as all your bad deeds. They could not do this unless they were working every time you broke a law of God or of the Church or of man. What kind of work was that? You know that when you commit a sin you go against your conscience. But you could not go against your conscience unless your conscience declared what was the right thing to do, or what was wrong, or what you should not do.

So your conscience is a faculty which every one in sane mind possesses, is a faculty which states for your direction what is right or what is wrong. By a faculty I mean a power to do something. Your

conscience then is a power you have, which judges what is right or wrong. When you examine this conscience you do so in order to find out whether your actions have or have not been what they should be, whether in other words you have acted with or against your conscience.

Among all your powers or all your faculties you perceive what a high place conscience holds and how important it is that you should be at peace with it, how you should prefer to suffer anything rather than in thought, word or deed to go against it. One thing worth knowing is that if you do what this conscience of yours tells you you should do, then not only will you be satisfied, but the Lord Himself will be pleased. Any one who when standing before God for judgment is able to say: Lord, I have done at all times, everything my conscience bade me do, such a one will hear from the lips of the Almighty these cheering words: Come, you blessed of my Father, and enter into the joy prepared for you.

It is a bad thing not to obey your conscience. Little by little your conscience will cease warning you and you will grow careless and go from bad to worse and the end will be, unless God's mercy prevents, the eternal loss of your immortal soul.

The conscience of the Catholic child is generally correct in what it directs. Sometimes, however, it may be wrong and sometimes it may be doubtful, it may not know what, in some particular cases, it should command. Let me suppose that it happens that it is impossible for you to learn from your conscience what is right and what is wrong—in other words you are uncertain. What are you to do?

The first thing for you to do is, if possible, to learn from your confessor or from some one older and wiser than yourself what is really the proper thing. However, it may easily occur that there is nobody near, whom you may ask advice from and yet you must act.

If this is the case then there remains one thing only for you. Say to your conscience: Just now I do not know what to do. I am ignorant of what is right or wrong in this matter. I do not want to commit a sin and if it was clear to me, I would do the best I could. But because I do not know which is good and which is bad, I will perform the action that I think has no sin in it. Acting this way you will commit no crime. If you can put it off until you hear from some one who knows, put it off; if not, go ahead as I told you above. One thing you must not do. In doubtful matters never say: I am in doubt, I know that this may be good and that may be bad, but I do not care, bad or good, I will do it. Such a performance, my dear children, would be criminal.

I have spoken about what is called a doubtful conscience because in this instruction I wish to prepare you for any difficulty you may have to meet in your future life when you will perhaps be too busy to consult or you will have no one at hand to point you out the way.

Love and respect and fear your conscience. I say fear as well as respect and love, because, if you notice, every time you rebelled against it, besides your conscience ordering you what to do it also threatened you with some punishment that might overtake you. There is nothing that brings so much consolation to you as a conscience which is at peace and has nothing to reproach you with. Such a conscience will make you happy in this life and when you are on your death bed will take away from you all the terrors of the grave. You will be afraid of no man and you will go to the judgment with the hope that God cannot be hard in His dealings with you, for if your conscience does not bear witness against you then Christ will be a father to you and not a judge.

You must remember that in that terrible moment of your departure from this life, when your soul leaves your body, it is immediately

brought for trial into the awful presence of its Maker. Christ who is your Creator as well as your Redeemer, is there to ask you for an account of everything you have said or done. He will investigate even your most hidden thoughts and desires. He knows everything and nothing can be concealed from Him. Besides the judge, there are the witnesses. Some of these love, some of them hate you. There is your good angel who holds you in affection. There is your bad angel and the great evil Archangel Lucifer, who hate you and who have no pity and who in that last moment would destroy you if they could. But the chief witness is your conscience.

If what your conscience declares is in your favor, nothing, no one, can harm you. So you see your conscience is everything. As you treat that conscience here it will be your friend there. Think of all this during these days of retreat and among the few resolutions which I will ask you to make let the principal one be that nothing will make you be disobedient to your conscience. Your resolve will be: Fidelity to Conscience.

I spoke of the few resolutions which I intend exhorting you to make. Not many resolutions are necessary. I was going to say, that very few are required; perhaps were I to say one would do, I would come nearer the truth. If you lead these days of prayer and reflection with the determination to be true to your conscience everywhere, at all times and in all things, not only will your first Communion be a good and a blessed one, but you will have laid the foundations of a Christian life which will make you model men and women, and force you to look back to the great day you are getting ready for, as the chiefest day of your existence.

Look therefore into your conscience. Speak to your conscience and listen to what it has to say to you. If it accuses you of something you have said, done, thought, or desired, or omitted, put that

down to be told to your confessor, excite yourself to contrition for all that is sinful and then make an agreement with your conscience that inasmuch as in you lies, your conscience will never have to reproach you with such conduct again.

This is one of the things to think about as you are preparing for your first Communion. And in thinking, as I have urged you to think, carry this other thought: He whom in two days from now I am going to receive is true God and true Man. As God He made me, as God and Man He redeemed me, and as God and Man He will judge me. So next Sunday I am going to admit into my heart my Judge. It must not be, it can not be, I must not suffer it to be that when on that day of days He is visiting my soul, visiting my whole being, I cannot suffer it to be, that then He will as He listens to my conscience, hear a single word of blame against me. I must therefore examine my conscience carefully. I must not be easy with myself. I am going to let nothing slip unheeded as I go through this conscience of mine. I will listen humbly and in sorrow to all its reproaches and I will lay all the charges it utters against me at the feet of my confessor and his absolution and my contrition will make my soul pure and thus in some way I will be a little worthy to receive my Maker, my Redeemer and my Judge.

III.—HOLY COMMUNION.

If you can recall what I said yesterday afternoon you will bring to mind that I spoke of two things. I wished to speak to you in such a way about reason that you would never forget that one of your best guides in this world is your reason. I mean that no matter how your feelings may urge you, they must always be led by reason. The best men and women in this world are found among those who do not act in a hurry, but who do everything they have to do calmly.

I said something to you also about your conscience. You might not be able to tell me what conscience is, and I believe your catechism says nothing about it, at least it does not tell you what it is, but I am sure that every child who has been to confession knows what it is. Every child knows that it is that very kind friend inside the soul which is always on the watch and which reminds each boy and each girl that there are things which must not be done just as there are things which must be done. Each individual hears his own conscience only and can not hear the advice of any one else's conscience.

My dear children, we know nothing about what happens in the souls of others. Nor need we know. It is none of our business. So very early we must learn the lesson that we are never to pass judgment upon others. Just let us go ahead quietly ourselves. Just let us be kind to everybody. Let us help them when we can, but above all things let us never judge them. Let us never say, not even in our own minds, that they have done things that were wrong. We must judge nobody. There is only one judge and that judge is Christ. He, Christ, whom you are going to receive the day after to-morrow, has told us not to judge. Judge not, He says, and you shall not be judged.

This shows you how mercifully God acts toward those who do

not judge their neighbor at all or who, if facts obliged them to, are very kind in their thoughts. The story is told of an old monk who was lying very near death. He was prey to no anxiety. He lay on his bed without any fear of his approaching end. His brethren were astonished at his calm. In reality one of them was frightened lest the poor dying man did not appreciate the seriousness of the awful moment. He thought it his duty to warn him. So he entered his cell and said: "Dear brother, you seem not to have any dread of the God before whom you are so soon to stand." The expiring brother replied gently: "I am not afraid. Why should I be? Did not Christ tell us that he who judges not shall not be judged? I believe what He says, and after a severe examination of my whole life, I feel sure that never in all my days did I pass judgment on any one, and so I know that my beloved Redeemer will keep His word and will not judge me; hence my soul is in the enjoyment of perfect peace."

What a beautiful death his was! Such a death may be yours. Learn from your youngest days to be kind in thought about others. This will come to be a habit and how pleasant you will make your own life and that of others, and above all how easy it will be for you to enter into the presence of your judge, and great, beyond any word of mine to express, will be your reward.

But while I am asking you to be lenient in judging others, I want you to learn to be very, very severe with yourselves. Do not hide anything from yourself. I mean any wrong thing of which you may be guilty. Do not make little of it. Do not grow accustomed to saying: "It's nothing;" "it's only a small sin." Yes, I say to you, not only be severe with yourself, but even be harsh. It is in this way that your conscience will grow more and more tender, more and more white and become a thing which the angels and God

Himself will take delight in gazing upon. It is the settling of your conscience, this removing every strain from it so that it may be in a condition fit to receive Our Lord for the first time that you and I have in view during these days of retreat.

A first Communion well made, made in whiteness of soul and made with a longing and loving desire to come so close to your Christ for the first time is a great, great blessing and a magnificent step in a life, which no matter how you may be circumstanced, will be marked by many trials, much suffering and constant temptation. Yes, the worthy reception of Communion will go very far toward preparing you for the troubles of this world.

I said worthy reception. Is it possible ever to be worthy of such a great favor? No, my dear children, it is not. What would you think if I told you that not one of the angels, not even the highest one could be worthy to receive Christ as a guest, as you do? Again, I am sure that you would feel inclined to accuse me of exaggerating, if I were to state that not even the Blessed Virgin could become with all her holiness, all her spotlessness, with all her immaculate purity, fit to admit her blessed Son into her soul in that wonderful way in which He enters every soul in the Sacrament of the Altar. Yet I do not exaggerate. If you could ask the angels or the Mother of God whether it was ever in their power to be worthy of the wonderful favor we are speaking of, the answer would be unhesitatingly and immediately that it was not in their power. You will understand this when you call to mind that both the Blessed Virgin and all the angels are only creatures, and no creature can be made sufficiently good to be able in a fitting manner to come into possession of the Creator in the way in which we do in Communion.

Just consider what the word communion means. It signifies union with, the being united to, the being made one with the Saviour who

is not man only, but the Second Person of the Most Holy Trinity, and, therefore, God. Can any one be in a becoming condition to be made one with God? Yet such is communion. Such will be your first Communion—you will be made one with God. This is why St. Paul said speaking of his union with Christ: I live? No, not I, but Christ lives in me.

If you think of this, in some ways it is more than enough to frighten us all, priests as well as every one else. I heard of a little girl who was asked by her parents what were her impressions, that is, how she felt as she received her first Communion. She answered: While the priest was putting Our Lord upon my tongue, I trembled, I was afraid, but when I received Him I could do nothing but love Him. This little story gives us an idea of the manner in which we should be disposed not only at our first, but at all our Communions.

We should fear and we should love. We should approach the Holy Table in dread and in humility, and at the same time in love. In humility because no matter how much we do, we can never render ourselves fit; in love because we are going to be united with One who loves us and Who has done so much for us, and Who is willing to do more for us, and who, moreover, has Himself invited us to come and have our souls healed and strengthened and purified by the wonderful food with which He is going to nourish them.

You might naturally ask: if no one can be really, in spite of all effort, if without exception no creature can be ever, worthy to receive this great Sacrament why should we go to or presume to approach it? The first reason is because the Church who is the one who takes God's place here on earth, not only invites us, but commands us to go at least once a year. We must never forget, no matter how impossible it is for us to be fit to receive this blessed Sacrament, that it was made for us, and, therefore, we need it in

a way that it is not in our power to express. Without it our souls would die. So we have been told by the Saviour, who said: "Amen, amen, I say to you except you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood you shall not have life in you. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath everlasting life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, abideth in me and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me and I live by the Father, so he that eateth me, the same also shall live by me. He that eateth this bread shall live forever" (John vi. 54-60). These are Our Lord's own words. They explain why our Holy Mother the Church commands us to go to Communion once a year—at Easter or thereabouts. She knows how easy it is for us to grow careless and to forget and hence she orders us to go—for our own good, just as a loving parent will make a sick child take medicine or food in order to bring back its health or save its life.

In the words of Our Lord recited above, you perceive how He insists on the absolute necessity of this Sacrament for us. He knows that we can never be worthy of the great gift, yet in spite of that he invites us to come, because we need divine food and divine drink in order to keep our souls alive. It is Christ's love for us that urges Him to invite us to partake of His heavenly nourishment. What Christ says makes known to us the great treasures—and all for us—which are contained in the wonderful Sacrament.

Let me sum up some of these benefits. Impress them on your mind—lose sight of them never. They are: If any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever—the blessing of eternal life. "Blessed are they that hunger, for they shall have their fill," which means that those who receive Holy Communion in the proper disposition will grow tired of things of this world, and will desire only the things of

God. In a word, the worthy communicant receives untold blessings—blessings which make him strong against all the temptations of the devil, the world and the flesh, and prepare him to enter into that abode where the angels are worshipping the Lamb—that is Christ in the Holy Eucharist—worshipping the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. Since the Blessed Sacrament contains all these gifts is it any wonder that the Church uses every means in her power to force her children to sit down at this wonderful feast?

When the Church tells us that we are obliged to go to Communion at least once a year, does she mean to imply that we should not go oftener? Every child here will say no, father, and every child will be right. Every boy and girl here has noticed that many Catholics, their fathers and their mothers, their elder sisters and brothers, go three or four times a year to Communion; some go once a month, others two or three times a month, others every week, others again twice or three times a week and some every day.

To prove to you how earnest and urgent the Church is in this matter of frequent communion it will be sufficient to recall that at one time in her history there arose a body of men who asserted, among other things, that nobody but a saint should be allowed to receive Holy Communion, and that, therefore, Catholics should go to that most blessed Sacrament very, very seldom. This doctrine was condemned by the Church and these men, called Jansenists, were excluded from the family of the faithful until they gave up their error. Recently Pius X, in order to end all disputes on the disposition necessary in communicants wrote to the rulers of the Church that frequent and even daily Communion should be encouraged among religious, among seminarians and among Christian youth of all classes. He tells us that the fruit of Communion depends on our preparation. The better the preparation is the larger and richer

will the fruit be. He exhorts, necessarily, as perfect a preparation as it is within our power, but says that freedom from mortal sin and the exclusion of all vain and human motives are not only a proper but a sufficient preparation even for daily communion. Of course, he continues, we must ask the advice of our confessor, but adds that no one is to be refused permission to receive who is in the state of grace and has a good and unworldly intention.

This not only is, but always has been, the teaching, the practice and the law concerning frequent Communion. He states that "by frequent or daily reception of the Sacrament, our union with Christ becomes closer, the life of the soul becomes healthier, the whole individual advances in virtue and is given a stronger pledge of life eternal." The Church has always taught this truth that the sacraments have been made for man and man has not been made for the sacraments. There is great consolation and encouragement in all this. It brightens the whole pathway of life for us, and fills us with a hope that in the end, that is, after death, our lot will be cast among the saints.

Yet you may ask me: if the Sacrament of the Eucharist be so holy, how is it that any one dare approach it? I couldn't answer your question had I not in mind the teaching of the Church, which teaching I have put before you just now. But there is something more. There is the invitation of Our Lord Himself. How loving and how sincere it is! "Come," He says, "come all ye who labor and are burthened and I will refresh you." Not only is there an invitation, but there is a command as well. He says: "Drink!" He says "Eat!" There can exist no doubt in our minds that we are more than welcome at the Holy Table. We may be perfectly sure that Christ and His Church would not be so urgent unless both meant what is contained in the invitation and the command and especially unless there

was some grave reason why we should frequently eat and drink of that Precious Flesh and most Precious Blood.

The road to heaven is a very difficult one. It means fatigue and trials. It is a fight in which the soul gives and takes many blows. The enemies are many and watchful, and treacherous. They prowl around like roaring lions seeking to devour us. Hence our poor souls need all the strength and all the assistance they can procure for themselves. They grow thirsty, those souls of ours, and they grow hungry. There is only one drink that can slake that thirst—it is the Blood of Christ. There is only one meat which is able to satisfy that hunger, it is the Flesh of Christ. The more we think it all out, the more clearly we see how much God loves us. We can make Him only one return and that is to love Him with all that we have and are.

IV. THE BLESSED EUCHARIST.

This instruction, my dear boys and girls, will be chiefly catechetical. I am going to bring back to your minds what you learned about the blessed Eucharist in Sunday-school. I have told you more than once that you can never study your Catechism well enough nor understand it too thoroughly. Catechism lessons are given you not only to prepare you for your proper reception of the sacraments, but to be a help to you during all the days of your life. You have been taught truths which you will be obliged to make use of as long as you live. After all, what is Catechism? It is the little book which teaches you how to live as Christians.

The life of a Christian is intended to be a preparation for heaven. God made you for heaven. He made you to believe in Him, to hope in Him, to love Him and to serve Him here, that you may be happy with Him in eternity. Your Catechism teaches you to know God, teaches you all that is necessary for you to know about Him. It moreover instructs you how to hope in Him and how to serve Him. You are taught in the very first pages what a great being He is and that He created you and hence that you belong to Him, body and soul, and that He has the first claim at all times and in all things upon you. He has the first right to your obedience. What you must do in order to obey Him you find in the Ten Commandments. You can not see God here, but there is one who takes His place and whose word you must never refuse to follow. That one is your mother the Church, and you are made familiar in your Catechism with her chief wishes in your regard, with her commands and her sacraments. Lastly you are made to value prayer as a means of keeping you close to God, as a means also of obtaining His assistance—that is, His grace, without which you can do nothing in the

order of salvation, without which you can not even pronounce with befitting reverence the most holy Name of Jesus.

What you get of knowledge from your Catechism the greatest minds in every age outside of the Church have not been able to grasp. What is it every one is anxious to know? Every one is eager to know whence he came, what this life means, and whither he is going after death. You would be astonished if I were to tell you the foolish answers men great in the esteem of the world, give to these all-important questions. Yet you Catholic children have answers and correct ones to all these questions right on the tip of your tongue. But, as I said, these answers must be ever fresh in your memories.

Suppose you were to forget that God made you, what kind of life would you lead? For whom would you care? Fear of some punishment alone would be able to keep you in the right way. Again, this same thing would follow if you lost sight of the commands of God or of those of His Church. Again, suppose that you became unmindful that a God was awaiting for you after you die, awaiting to judge and sentence you; suppose you became unmindful that there was a hell, or that there was a heaven, what manner of death would yours be and above all what would be your fate, your condition during the endless years that are to roll on in eternity?

Remember that the main thing is to get to heaven. 'Our Lord said to Martha: "Martha, Martha, thou art troubled about many things, but there is only one thing necessary." Think of it! Only *one* thing needful. Yet there are so many things that we think necessary. Yet there is only one. That one thing is not long life, nor health, nor wealth, nor comfort, nor glory, nor friends. No! That one thing is to reach heaven, that one thing is to save our souls. We can get along without all those other things, but fancy how awful it

will be if we lose our souls. "What will it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul"? Try and reason that saying of Our Lord out. Study every word of it and then calculate not how much it will profit, but how impossible it is to count up the loss.

You see how much your Catechism means to you and hence you should treasure up forever all its teachings.

Let me, in a few words, go over all that you have found in that little book of yours about the adorable Sacrament which you are going in a very short time to receive. How many books, how many large volumes have been written upon this subject! Every author has laid stress upon the place it holds among all the sacraments of the Church. They have insisted that none of the seven can compare with it as a fountain of grace which will never run dry, and this they do in order to let us see that "for no crime is there reserved by God a more terrible vengeance than for the sacrilegious abuse of this sacrament which is full of holiness itself" (Cat. Conc. Trid). The awful consequences of such a sin are expressly mentioned in more than one passage of Holy Scripture.

You have studied the history of the institution or the making of this great Sacrament. It took place in this institution—that is, the Blessed Sacrament began to be that night, which has since been called Holy Thursday, on which Our Lord took His last meal with His apostles—a meal which is known under the name of the "Last Supper." You have seen many pictures of that Last Supper. You have noticed the Master seated at the table and with Him were His apostles. The twelve were there—even Judas. These were the twelve men who on that night were made the first priests and who were the first to use the power then given to them to celebrate Mass and to consecrate—that is, to change the bread and wine into the body and blood, soul and divinity of Jesus Christ. They were simple

words which Christ used, but they were wonder-working words in His mouth, and were to be the same wonderful words on the lips of all those who became and have become priests since. So, too, will it be unto the end of the world. These words are, as we are told by Scripture: "This is my body;" "this is my blood." "Jesus took bread and giving thanks to God, blessed and brake and gave to his disciples and said: Take ye and eat. This is my body, which shall be delivered for you; this do for the commemoration of me. And taking the chalice also after he had supped, he said: This chalice is the New Testament in my blood; this do as often as ye shall drink it in commemoration of me."

By these words it is clear to us when and how the great Sacrament came into being and how, moreover, that great Sacrament was put within the reach of the faithful forever. They show also, do these words, that Communion is a sacrament. There is the outward sign, bread and wine. Bread and wine nourish and strengthen the body; they are signs external—that is, signs which we can see. Signs of the food and strength of the soul, which food and strength are the grace conveyed to all who communicate. Finally it is Christ who institutes those signs and so we have a complete, a perfect sacrament, for we have the three things which go to build up a sacrament—that is, we have an outward sign, a sign signifying interior grace and that sign is instituted by Christ.

This Sacrament has names without number. The act of receiving it is called Communion. The explanation of this word has already been given. It is also called the Sacrament of the Eucharist which meant "good grace," says the Catechism of the Council of Trent, or "the thanksgiving." It is called "good grace," because it is a fore-taste of eternal life, because it contains Christ Our Lord, the true grace and the source of all heavenly gifts. "The thanksgiving" is a

fitting name, for when this spotless victim is offered, there is rendered to God a homage of priceless value in gratitude for all the benefits received. Moreover at the Last Supper, Christ in instituting this mystery "taking bread, he brake it and gave thanks." It is also called "the Sacrifice," because in it in a wonderful way Christ sacrifices Himself to His Father. It is sometimes, especially when received when one is in danger of death, styled Viaticum, which means food for a journey, because by Communion we are supported on the road of life and above all because it prepares us for our passage to eternal happiness. Many other names has it about which, if we have time, something may be said later.

This Sacrament brings to our recollection, when we reflect upon it with serious thought, three things. They are: the Passion of Christ, Divine Grace, and Eternal Glory. When you are preparing, as is now the case, think of all that this Sacrament means for you. It means that Christ died for you, that though dying He invented a way to live among us forever and that a day is coming when He will no longer be veiled under the appearances of bread and of wine, but we will behold Him in all His beauty, face to face in heaven.

There is no doubt that this Sacrament merits being called the sacrament of God's love for man. Will it ever be possible for us to do enough to get ourselves ready for Communion?

However, let there be no anxiety. Do your best and the Lord will be satisfied. Bread and wine are what is termed the matter of this Sacrament—that is, bread and wine are the elements used by the priest and which his words change into the body and blood of Christ. When the priest has uttered these all-powerful words you still see what looks like bread and what looks like wine, but our faith teaches us that there is no longer bread and no longer wine, but the bread is the body and the wine is the blood of Our Lord, which has only the

appearance of bread and wine. The change brought about by the priest is called transubstantiation, which means that one substance is changed into another and thus the substance of the bread becomes the substance of the Body of Christ and the substance of the wine becomes the substance of the Blood of Christ. There is no longer bread, there is no longer wine, there are only the Body and the Blood of Christ.

Do we understand this? We know, of course, what takes place, but do we understand how it all happens? No! It is a mystery—that is, it is a something which is away beyond our reason. We have only to believe, to adore, and to love. All the sacraments are mysterious, but not one of them is so full of mysteries as is the Blessed Sacrament. They are all mysteries of God's love for man.

You will often hear the expression: *the Real Presence*. For us Catholics that means that wherever we find a consecrated host—that is, a host over which the priest has said the words of consecration, “this is my body, this is the chalice of my blood”; wherever you find **such** a host, whether it is in the tabernacle, or in the hands of the priest, whether it is in the ciborium or in the ostensorium, or in the jail, or the pest-house, or the hovel, or the palace, whether in America, Asia, Africa or Europe, wherever then there is such a host, it is the real presence of Christ—that is, wherever it is found Christ is really present, just as I am really present before you or just **as** you are really present before me.

Another feature of this mystery must not be forgotten. There is only one Christ in heaven and there is only the same Christ on earth in the Blessed Sacrament. There may be millions of consecrated hosts the world over, but it is the same Christ—a million hosts and only one Christ. This is marvelous, but it is true, no matter how hard it may be for us to comprehend it. But there is something

just as wonderful, perhaps more so, and that is the Christ who is in heaven, is whole and entire in each part, no matter how numerous the parts may be. Hence if the host is divided Christ's body is not divided, but it is only one and the same body in each division.

Let me make use of the words of St. Augustine: "Each communicant receives Christ the Lord entire in each particle; He is not diminished by being given to many, but gives Himself whole and entire to each." Do not forget that it is the Jesus Christ who lived on earth and who ascended gloriously to heaven and is there now triumphant, that comes to you in Communion. Now Christ when He was on earth was God as well as man and so you receive Him as He is, you receive therefore not only His Body and Blood but His Soul and Divinity as well.

You behold, my dear children, that this great Sacrament is a world of wonders and the more we think of it all, the more difficult is it to give a proper explanation. Let me repeat that all we have to do is to bow down, to believe, to adore, to love, and to be grateful. How much consolation are they deprived of who have not in their different religions this great Sacrament.

How happy ought we not to consider ourselves who possess this wonderful blessing and how eager we ought to be to share frequently in all the graces which it holds for us! Pius X has urged upon all Catholics that they should receive frequently. He states that all that is required is a twofold disposition. A disposition of the body which means to remain fasting from midnight until you receive; a disposition of the soul which is to be in a state of grace and to have no vain motive when approaching the Holy Table.

Think very often of what I have told you to-day. I have put before you thoughts which ought to make you prize the great grace and benediction and privilege which are in store for you. I would

suggest three acts which you might make all day to-morrow and on the morning of your first Communion. Make acts of humility, of contrition and of desire. Acts of humility will render you very agreeable in the sight of the Lord. Contrition will whiten your soul more and more and desire will inspire you to pray to Christ that on His first sacramental coming to you He will find you a child according to His most sacred Heart. Lord, I am not worthy—say only the word and my soul shall be healed.

V.—HUMILITY.

My dear children, I gave you in the last instruction an explanation of nearly everything you have learned in your Catechism about the Sacrament which to-morrow you will receive for the first time. What your Catechism says on this matter is to be remembered all your lives, and especially to be thought of every time you receive. The more you know about the Holy Eucharist the more earnest will be your desire to communicate and the more carefully will you prepare yourselves in order to obtain the great graces which God will give you.

Just now I want you to repeat in your thoughts the definition of the Sacrament. It is that Sacrament which contains the body and blood, soul and divinity of Jesus Christ. Weigh well every word of this definition. You can never receive properly unless you know what it is, unless you realize, that is, unless you make clear to yourselves what it is that will become part of your being when you approach Holy Communion.

Two thoughts must be always with you when you are about to go up to the altar. One thought is the thought of how little you are who are going to be admitted to this privilege, which no language can fitly put into words. The other is the thought of Him with whom you are going to be so closely united.

Have you ever asked yourselves what you are? How much have you to be proud of? Let us see: How helpless you were in your infancy! How little, if anything, you could do for yourselves! If you had died when you were babes the world could have gone along without you, nobody would have missed you. Your parents would shed a few tears over you and then would have placed you in your little coffin and put you in your graves, and on this earth all would

have been the same as before. In fact, my dear children, would it have made any difference if you had never been born?

This shows you how small you are. Then you grew up. You are all about eleven years old. You are able in memory to travel back, say some four or five years. What have you been in those years? What have you done? You have lived, but how? How much happiness have you brought to your parents, your brothers, your sisters, your friends? Rather ask yourselves, how much trouble have you been? Then, what have you done in all those years? How good have you been? How bad have you been? Have you been bad rather than good, or have you been good rather than bad? Have you been pleasant at home or have you been disagreeable? What kind of words have you spoken to your father, your mother, your sisters, your brothers, your playmates, your teachers, your Sunday-school superiors and those in whose class you have been every day? How have you dealt with God in your prayers on Sundays and holy days of obligation? When you were at Mass how did you behave? Were you silent, respectful, prayerful? Did you always go to Mass when you could or when you were sent? Yes, ask yourselves how did you hear Mass? Your actions—of what kind have they been? Your actions when with others or when alone? Are they something to be proud of or something to be ashamed of? What kind of an effect have those deeds of yours had upon those with whom you went? Did they make them better or did they make them worse?

Do not be afraid to ask yourselves. I have in view the making you know how unworthy you may be to receive Communion, to make you humble. My desire is to make you enter into yourselves and behold yourselves as God beholds you. I want you to learn how to examine yourselves and, above all, I want you to be sorry, heartily

sorry for everything and to be determined that after your first Communion you will be new boys and new girls and that you will build up a new life, building it upon that strongest and most lasting of all foundations, Jesus Christ.

What has been, since you were able to remember, the nature of your thoughts? What kind of things have you been thinking about? Have you had unkind thoughts, envious, jealous, revengeful, mean thoughts and also proud ones, about your neighbors? Would you be glad to have these thoughts of yours known to the world? Would you be proud if any one heard all the words you have spoken since you were able to speak? So for your deeds—would you wish the whole world to learn what they were? I am sure you would not, yet God knows them all, has seen, has heard them all, every one, even the most hidden.

It matters not what people may think or say of you, but it makes all the difference in the world what God thinks of you. You are no better, you are no worse, than He knows you to be. You are simply only what you are in His sight. I have made you look yourselves over in this way in order to help you to go to your first Communion feeling not at all vain, not at all proud, but feeling humble, with a low opinion of yourselves and wondering how the Lord can bear to have one who has offended Him so much and so often come into such close union with Him. The only reason that He allows this is because He loves you and the knowledge of His love should move you to love Him in such a way that no temptation, however strong, would be able or strong enough to make you in thought, word or deed forget anything He has done for you.

St. Ignatius, the illustrious founder of the order of Jesuits, has a few thoughts which help very much toward finding out just how small we are, no matter how great we may think ourselves to be.

He says: What has man that he has given himself? Did he make himself—his body, his will, his memory, his understanding? How much can man do for himself? What is he able to do in presence of sickness, of pestilence? When death comes, no matter how he strives, he can not delay its approach one single second. All the wealth of all the millionaires is not enough to buy for the dying man one afternoon of life. And what is man's body? How frail it is! It is the prey of so many diseases, and when the man dies how loathsome, how hideous the body becomes. Yet, my dear children, we pay so much attention to the body. We care for it more than for anything else. Man's soul comes from God. Yet see, because it is united with the body, the many dangers it is exposed to. I do not now speak of the possibility of its eternal loss. I speak of what I might call the powers of the soul. There is the power of knowing. How few things we know after all and how much ignorance there is on this earth among men! Men are making mistakes all the time and mistakes that are very serious. They are wrong about so many things. Yet a man is sometimes proud of his mind. People talk of how wonderfully gifted he is—of what a great mind he has, and yet a blow on the head, a fall, a fever, and then what becomes of that great brain of his?

The saint puts to us the following questions. I will repeat them in my own way: What is one child here compared with all the three or four hundred children on this retreat? I want each boy and each girl to give an answer to that question because I want each boy and each girl to learn what mites they are and in this way become humble in thought and word and deed. Now what is one child here compared with all the millions in this great city? You see how small you become. What is one child alongside of the billion of people on this globe, or alongside of the angels in heaven—

the angels who are so beautiful and so powerful? Again, you find yourselves growing less and less. But what are all the beings on this earth or in the other world, what are they all together compared with God who made them out of nothing and could, as easily as He created them, destroy them, that is, drive them back into that nothing from which they were produced? Now what is any child here alongside of God? Why, the child can hardly see itself; it almost disappears. Remember that no matter how famous you may become, each or any one of you, no matter what the world may think of you, no matter how much wealth you may heap up, you are always nothing but that little bit of a thing when you contrast yourself with God. Yet when you offend God by any wilful sin, you, that small thing, smaller than a worm, smaller than the tiniest insect, have dared to lift your hand against the Almighty.

Suppose you are walking down a country road and a worm or a toad crosses your path. You feel like crushing it out of existence. It is something like this with God, when you are in sin. There is not anything that God has made that is as ugly in His sight as you when in sin. Yet He has let you live. Why? Because, though He hates sin, His mercy is always ready to pardon you in case you have contrition and repent. Certainly you can easily understand these two things; you can easily understand first that God is infinitely powerful and therefore is to be feared by all men, but chiefly by the sinner.

You can easily understand, in the second place, that, as I have told you so often, but can not tell you often enough, the one thing in this world which you should dread and hate more than anything else is sin, not only mortal sin, but sin of any kind. What terrible danger the sinner is always in until he gets rid of his crime! Fancy any one in mortal sin, getting up in the morning, eating and

drinking, going to school or going to work or enjoying life and then going to bed in mortal sin. What a fearful condition his is! He is in sin. God is angry against him and the devil is really asking of God to give him the soul of that unfortunate individual. Do you know of any state like it in its fearfulness? If God says the word then all is lost and his place will be found forevermore with those who are in torment, who will never know hope any more, but who will dwell in darkness and gnashing of teeth forever. Words can not paint the fate of that man.

Many reasons are there, why we should detest sin! Let us ask you, has sin ever made you really happy? Has any sin which you have committed given you all it promised you when it began to tempt you? Has it ever been anything to boast of? Yes, I know there are sinners who really glory in their sin. But will anybody who thinks, deem them worthy of praise? Is not sin always a disgrace? Is it not something dark, something which most people are anxious to hide? But one of the chief reasons why you should hate sin is because it puts you in danger of everlasting punishment.

The chief reason which should stir you, my dear children, to detest sin is because it is an insult to God who has loved you so much and who is willing to do so much for you here and hereafter. I am saying so much about sin in order to make it disgusting to you, for the reason that it makes you unworthy to receive that great Sacrament for which you are preparing. One reason why we are never fit, why no one can ever be fit, is the great distance which lies between God and you.

I have tried to make you perceive, if it is ever possible to perceive it, what a very, very mite you are. I will now ask you to make an effort to get some kind of an idea how great God is. To help you in this we will simply go back to that precious little book, your Cate-

chism. What does it tell you of God? Very little, but that little is really all we know about that Great Being. Volumes upon volumes have been written about the nature and perfections of the Maker of all things, yet everything we may read in those books adds nothing to what you are able to learn in your Catechism. Though all we are taught is not very much, still, if we think it all out, it will be in our power to know that He is the first and the only one and the best. It is enough for us to be told that He is so wonderful that not only the mind of the little child but all the minds of all the great men ever since the beginning of the world, with all their thoughts about the Lord put together, can not commence to take in God's vast being. This fact in itself gives us some notion of His greatness.

But to our Catechism. Who made you? Who made the world—who made all the worlds? God. Hence He is more than all His huge and splendid worlds and more than all and everything and everybody in all these worlds. How did He make these worlds—all of them? Out of nothing. By His wish, by a word only. He said, Let everything be, and everything rose into being. How rich in power He must be! And only One Being performed all this, because there is only one God. Your Catechism tells you more of God's power. He is called Omnipotent. Not only has He made all things which have been made, but there is nothing which He can not do. How foolish to offend one who holds so much strength in His hands! How rash likewise and how dangerous! Is it any way strange that He says: "I am the Almighty God, walk before me and be perfect" (Gen. xvii). He is stronger than all the tides and waves and winds of the universe—than all the storms and than all the tempests. Yes—should our prayer be—Yes, O Lord, "Great power always belonged to Thee alone and who shall resist the

strength of Thy arm? For the whole world before Thee is as the least grain of the balance and as a drop of the morning dew that falleth down upon the earth" (Wis. xi, 23). This and much more does your Catechism, or rather does one line of your Catechism, bring out concerning the power of God.

That God of greatness and power you are going to receive to-morrow. How white you should make your souls in order to be as prepared as you can to meet Him in His dreadful majesty. You are going to receive Him whom the heavens and the earth can not contain. Therefore open up your hearts to let in this majestic Ruler of all things. Because He is powerful fear Him—but because He loves you promise all your love in return.

VI. THE GREAT LOVE OF JESUS.

This is the last instruction I am going to give you before you receive your first Communion, for which, I am very much pleased to be able to tell you, you have been doing your best to prepare. You will remember that I have endeavored to make you aware of the greatness of the Sacrament, so that you would leave nothing undone to be ready for it.

The Sacrament contains the Godhead and the manhood of Jesus Christ. He who is coming to you and who is glad to visit your souls is not only man but God at the same time. About God you can never know enough. The knowledge you obtain of Him will fill your hearts with two feelings—a feeling of fear and a feeling of love. If love and fear work together in your hearts, those hearts of yours can not fail to be ready; that is, as ready as it is possible for any one to be. God is all-powerful, so you must fear Him, and all-good, so you must love Him. Scripture says, “Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth.” So many forget God as they grow up, forget Him altogether. It is this forgetfulness of God which is the cause of all the sin there is in the world, which is the cause of so many losing their souls. Learn to think of Him while you are children and there is a great chance that you will not lose sight of Him when you become men and women.

There is only one God and He has made all things and He can do all things. There was never another God and there never will be, because there can be only one God. He has no body, your Catechism tells you, and therefore can not be seen with the eyes of the body. But He is, and is just as really as you are, or, rather, He is more really than you are. His perfections are without bounds. His being is like a sea that has no shore, that can not be fathomed. He

is everywhere, everywhere. No one can fly from Him. Wherever you are He is. Nobody can flee from His face. If you ascend into heaven, He is there. If you descend into hell He is present. If you take wings early in the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall God lead you and His right hand shall hold you. Perhaps darkness shall cover you and night—but darkness shall not be dark to Him, and night shall be light as the day; the darkness and the light are alike to Him. He is higher than heaven and is above the height of the stars. Heaven can not contain Him.

The language I have just used is from Holy Scripture. Scripture is the Bible and the Bible is the Word of God, and so what I have told you above is the speech which God uses about Himself. Hence, my dear children, never forget this greatness of God. Set the Lord always in thy sight. It was this keeping the Lord always in sight that made the saints lead the lives they led. They kept Him before them always and so were afraid to sin. They held Him always before their eyes and hence obeyed in all things and were ever in fear of disobeying. Because they walked always before Him they were prepared to go everywhere for Him, to suffer for Him, to die for Him. Think of this wonderful God whom you are going to receive to-morrow and I am sure that your souls will be pure from all sin, your hearts will be filled with love, your wills will be determined never to offend Him, and then your Communion day will be the beginning of a new life, and to-morrow will be one of the greatest days of your whole existence.

It is very easy for a Catholic to keep God and to keep Jesus Christ in mind. There is no prayer in our Church which has not the name of God or the name of His Divine Son in it. There is the sign of the Cross. There is the Our Father, the Hail Mary, the Creed, the Confiteor and the Acts of Faith, Hope, Charity and Con-

trition. It is impossible therefore to make use of these prayers in a proper spirit without thinking of God or of the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, who became man for our salvation, who built our Church, who is the cornerstone and the foundation of that Church of ours, and who gave us the great blessings of the seven Sacraments.

I think I have pointed out the perfections of God which you have learned in your Catechism. Remember that every word in your Catechism about God has a meaning which you must always keep in mind. It is by keeping this meaning in mind and by trying to understand it that you will get to ^{that you} know much about God, and the more you learn about Him the greater and more lasting will become your fear and your love of Him. I say love, because I do not want the thought of God to frighten you. God is great and therefore is to be feared, but He is also to be loved. Your faith teaches you that.

When Our Lord taught the multitudes how to pray he taught them to call God "Our Father" and that prayer which is so often recited is a prayer which should move us to love that Father. In Baptism you were made His children—not only His children but His heirs as well. You are entitled to possess that beautiful kingdom which is called heaven. For the little He asks you to do for Him here He will reward you with a kingdom in which there will be joy not only for a time but for eternity. I would like to say more to you about God's love for His children. I would like you to recall everything He has done for you since the beginning, the care He has taken of your body and your soul, all that He means to do for you in the future if you allow Him to have His own way and do nothing to prevent Him. If you look into your own lives, each one of you, brief though those lives of yours have been, you would find proofs without number of the love He has had for you. Sometime before

your Communion make an effort to remember all the things that have come into your lives and which have made you happy. When you have brought them all before you, tell yourselves that they have all come from God your Father, just as the rays of light come from the sun. I am sure when you reflect in this way upon God's goodness to you, you will find your hearts stirred to acts of thanksgiving and love. Love is everything in matters between God and your own souls. There must be fear—but it should be what is called reverential fear, that is, a fear which is very much like love, a fear of offending God, not because He will punish you, but because you do not wish in any way to break His law. In this way you will begin to be led by love especially.

The shortest road to God, my good children, is the road of love. You know how much you are willing to do for those you love, for those who are dear to you. An old Father used to say that when we love we find no difficulty in acting, or if there is any difficulty we love the difficulty. Love makes all things easy. The saints talk of the easy ways of divine love and they mean that everything is done cheerfully where the motive is love.

As your Catechism tells you, Jesus Christ is not only God, but He is also man and hence when you communicate, you receive not only the divinity of Christ, but His soul, His body and His blood. What does your Catechism teach concerning Jesus as man? It informs you that God was His father and that the Blessed Virgin Mary was His mother. You know that the little child born so many years ago in a stable at Bethlehem was not only the little child whom the angels adored, and the shepherds and the kings from the East adored, but He was at the same time God. He had always been God, but He has been man only since the time of his coming upon earth. It is very profitable while we are speaking of Jesus Christ as

man to remember that He is God. This will fill our minds with wonder, will fill our hearts with love.

Christ lived on earth about thirty-three years. He lived all those years not because it was necessary for our salvation that He should do so, but to show us the way to heaven by His teaching and example. He was an infant, then a child, then a young man, then a man. Thirty years he led a hidden life and of those years nearly all that we know is that He was obedient to His parents. When He was a man, some thirty years old, He began to show Himself to the people. He lived almost entirely in public. He was baptized. He went to the synagogue, that is, the church of the Jews, and He taught and He preached to all who wished to hear Him. He converted a great number—among them the apostles who afterwards went everywhere and brought the knowledge of Christ to all the nations.

Some of those before whom He preached hated Him. It is true that most of the Jews and others found themselves drawn to Him, and followed and loved Him. He performed wonders that proved to all that He was not only man but God. However, in spite of everything, in spite of all His goodness, His enemies were stronger than His friends. I say they were stronger; I do not say they were more numerous. Those who hated Christ were the Pharisees and the scribes. As you grow older you will learn more about these men. It is enough to say that they were unholy men and greedy and they desired to be considered as the real rulers in Israel. They were afraid Our Lord would make them known to the people, for if the people knew just what they were they would not look upon them as safe, but rather as dangerous guides. Our Lord, whose most Sacred Heart was running over with mercy, Our Lord who was so gentle and kind in His speech, never spared the scribes and Pharisees. He called them hypocrites. He likened them to whitened

sepulchres. They rose up against Him, they excited the people and went to the Roman governor and accused Christ of being a rebel, of exhorting the Jews to rise up and revolt against the authorities.

With this accusation began the persecution of Christ, began His Passion, a passion so bitter that Christ asks the whole world to come and see if there is any suffering like His sorrow. It was one long agony. It commenced—when do you think, my dear children? It commenced the very night on which the great Sacrament of which you are going to partake to-morrow was instituted.

Can you help wondering how Christ could be so good to men? The very moment they were plotting to lay hands upon Him and to kill Him, at that very moment He was preparing that feast of love which was to last as long as the Church. At the very hour in which men were bitterest against Him He was fullest of love for them. Yes, I may say that the Passion began during the last supper. Perhaps the hardest blow struck Our Lord in His whole Passion was struck during that last supper. The blow that I mean was the one that fell upon Him from the treacherous hand of Judas, one of His apostles. When Our Lord said, "Amen I say to you that one of you is about to betray me," the disciples looked one upon another and being very much troubled began every one to say: "Is it I, Lord?" Judas knew that Christ meant him, because he knew that not only was he going to break bread unworthily with the Lord, but that he had already seen the enemies of Christ and had sold Our Lord to them.

Here pause to learn in such a way as never to forget how terrible a thing it is to make a bad Communion. I will repeat to you the words of Christ on that night: "The Son of Man indeed goeth, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man shall be betrayed—it were better for him, if that man had not been born." Suppose, my

dear children, I were to say to you, There is one here who is going to-morrow morning to receive Communion unworthily. What excitement and what alarm there would be. But I am not going to say anything of the kind, first because I do not know and secondly because I feel sure from all that I have seen of you and know about you that all will be well with you and your God, that your first Communion will be a good one and that Christ will not have to say to any child here the words which He spoke on the night of the Last Supper.

I will not go through all that Christ suffered all night Thursday and the greater part of Friday, during which time He was in the hands of His foes. He even suffered at the hands of His friends. Not only did Judas betray Him, but Peter denied Him and the other apostles deserted Him. No words can tell how much He suffered in the garden, or at the pillar, or when He was crowned with thorns, and human tongues must remain silent in presence of the agony on the Cross.

I have put these ideas before you in order to make you fear and love, now that you are so near to the great act of your life. Fear because God is all-powerful and all-just and because Christ suffered so much for sin; and love, because God is all-good and Christ went through all the stations of the Way of the Cross. He was born and lived in poverty because He loved our souls and understood as we can not understand here below, that a man must take more care of his soul than of his body, and hence He reckoned His Passion as nothing if men only followed the road pointed out by His teachings and His example.

In a few moments you will make your Confession. I know how splendidly you have been preparing yourselves. I know how much sorrow you have for all your sins. I know how pure you are going

to make your souls. I know that Christ is impatient to greet you in the Blessed Sacrament of His love. Your pastor and all the priests have been praying that you may obtain the grace of approaching the holy table worthily. Your fathers and your mothers and all who love you have been making the same request before the throne of God. You have been praying for the same favor yourselves. I am sure all these prayers will be heard. Your first Communion will be not only a worthy but a very fervent one. When Our Lord is in your hearts to-morrow, beseech Him to bestow upon you the gift of fear and the gift of love. This is the blessing I wish all the children.

VII. THANKSGIVING AND RENEWAL OF VOWS.

I have brought you together, my dear children, this afternoon for more than one reason. I wish in the first place to let you know how edified all the priests and the people were this morning to see how every one of you seemed to feel how important a thing it was to be admitted to first Communion. Everybody in the church I am sure was impressed by your silence and your modesty and your reverence. Your parents were made very glad and no doubt they expect that in all your dealings with them you are going to prove that your little retreat and, above all, the grace of the Sacrament are going to make you better children in every way, more obedient at home, more industrious in school, more respectful to all your superiors and more gentle and kind toward all those with whom you play and work.

Yes, children, this Sacrament must produce really remarkable changes in all you do and in all you think and speak. The great day has come and is fast passing away, but the memory of it must never die. Think of the number of children the world over who have not had, and who never will have the privilege which was yours this morning. How grateful you ought to be and how prompt you should be in making clear your gratitude. If I left out anything that it was my duty to tell you it may have been the subject of thanksgiving after Communion.

Of course, of yourselves, without any hint on my part you would naturally think that the first thing it became you to do, was to give heartfelt thanks for the priceless blessing bestowed on you in being allowed to become so closely united to Christ as you became this morning. Sometimes when you obtain what you ask in your prayers, you forget to thank the Lord for His goodness. This may be a reason why when you ask a second time, for something else, you

are not so successful. You should never allow a day to pass without lifting up your hearts to God in thanksgiving for all His blessings. This act ought to be performed in your daily prayers and chiefly in those you say in the evening.

On a Communion day it is only right for you to thank Him more than once, indeed very often. To do this it is not necessary to go to church. You can pray everywhere. Nor need you use any set form of words. Just tell Him with reverence that you thank Him. Holy men and women keep thanking Christ frequently during the time that passes between one Communion and another. They understand that it is impossible to be thankful enough for the special favor of even a single Communion. The prayer of thanksgiving was a favorite one with the saints. Their hearts were uttering thanks almost constantly. They thanked Him for everything. Some of them gave thanks for gifts which others than themselves received. It is said of St. Theresa that if she saw a little bird drinking from a fountain she thanked God for the pleasure the bird enjoyed because it was not in its power to do it for itself. You may be sure that such an action was most agreeable to heaven.

Suppose that some of you on account of the excitement of this great day forgot this duty of thanksgiving. Then I tell that it is not too late yet and I say to all of you that your last thought to-night when you reflect upon the mercies of to-day ought to be a thought of gratitude. Thanksgiving after Communion must never be neglected. I am afraid that there are many people who return to their places in church from the altar and are so full of distractions that they do not say one word of thanks. Some will rush out after Mass is over and go among their friends, to their homes or to their work, and will not give a single thought to the fact that they had received such a remarkable blessing. Besides, think what a rich moment that

must be in which you have Jesus Christ in your possession. What can He not do for you? It is the moment in which you may beg of Him everything you stand in need of. For a brief space you have Him all to yourselves, just as really as the blessed mother had Him when she held Him in her arms in the days of His infancy. You may readily see that if you do not make the proper use of the precious minutes during which He is with you, you will let Him depart without reaping those wonderful graces which He comes to bestow upon you.

If you are careful about two things, that is about your preparation for, and your prayer after, Communion, you will grow stronger and stronger against temptation, you will hate sin more and more, and there will come to you a great love for the Blessed Sacrament and a desire to approach it as often as possible. There is spiritual Communion which can be made everywhere and at all times. The sick and those who are away from the opportunity of receiving often should learn to communicate in this spiritual manner. You may make it every time you go to Mass, every time you enter a church. The method is very simple. You must be in the state of grace—this is the first condition. All you have then to do is to make an act of contrition and then express a sincere desire to receive. You may picture yourselves as kneeling in presence of the priest who places the Blessed Sacrament on your tongue—you can imagine yourselves taking it from his hands and then a short prayer of thanksgiving and of petition. This as I told you is a frequent practice among the saints which goes to prove that it must be of great help to holy souls and to those souls who are trying to become holy.

Of spiritual Communion the Catechism of the Council of Trent speaks in these words: After mentioning sacramental Communion—that is Communion as it was given to you this morning—the Cate-

chism remarks: "Others are said to receive the Holy Eucharist in spirit only; they are those who, inflamed with a lively 'faith that worketh by charity,' partake in desire of this heavenly food from which they receive if not the entire at least very considerable fruit." If I were to give you a definition of spiritual Communion I would call it a Communion of desire.

As a general thing Holy Communion is given at Mass, which brings me to ask you what is the difference between the Sacrament and the Mass. Your little book answers. You have been already told what the Sacrament of Eucharist is. The Mass is not the Sacrament only. It is more, for during the Mass the priest performs that stupendous act which changes the substance of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ. The priest besides receives Communion at every Mass which he celebrates, but the Mass is offered up by him as a sacrifice which is the same sacrifice as that of the Cross.

A sacrifice, as you learned, is the offering and the consuming of something offered to God. The sacrifice of the Mass is the offering up of the body and blood of Christ by a priest to God alone, and the consuming it to acknowledge that He is the Creator and Lord of all and everything. The Mass, therefore, honors and glorifies God, it thanks Him for all the graces bestowed on the whole world; it satisfies God's justice for the sins of men and it obtains all blessings. I mention this in order that you may increase your attention and reverence during the holy sacrifice so that when at any Mass you are going to Communion your preparation will be more fitting and your devotion greater. I want you also, when ever you think of Mass to think of Communion, and whenever you think of Communion to think of Mass.

When I began this instruction I told you that I called you together

this afternoon of the day of your first Communion for more than one reason. Some of those reasons you already know. There is another. We are going to finish this beautiful day, as far as you and I are concerned—we are going to crown everything by a renewal of the vows we made in Baptism. Why this renewal to-day? Because to-day you have become one with Jesus Christ, you have been in a very special manner united to Him, you have, so to speak, declared before the whole world, that forever hereafter you are going to be on His side in the fight which He eternally wages against the world, the flesh and the devil. Hence you repeat the promises made when you were baptized. The day of your baptism you were not capable of making those promises yourselves so your Godparents made them for you. The Church accepted those promises just as if they had been uttered by yourselves and as a consequence you gained the great grace of the Sacrament, but it was with the understanding that when you were able to reason about things you were, in some way or other, to repeat the vows then made in your name.

There are many beautiful prayers used by the Church at Baptism and the whole ceremony ought to be read by you. While it shows you the grandeur of the Sacrament and its wonderful effects it will make clear to you what the gift of faith received at the font did, has been doing, can and will do for the faithful child of the Church. What do you seek of me, asks the Church of the infant about to be washed in the saving waters of Baptism. The answer is: faith which brings to life everlasting. The Church tells how through faith life everlasting is reached. She says: If therefore thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments and love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbor as thyself. Then the evil spirit is banished and the sign of the Cross is formed on the forehead and

heart of the child. The priest then touches the ears and nostrils of the infant. The Sacrament will be given in a short second, but beforehand the child must make the solemn promises which if kept after Baptism will secure for him life eternal.

Here are the promises which were made in your name then, but which you yourselves are at the end of this instruction going to make for yourselves. First promise: "I do renounce Satan." Second promise: "I do renounce all the works of Satan." Third promise: "I do renounce all the pomps of Satan." After these promises the priest anoints the infant, and when the sponsors make for the child a profession of faith, the Baptism in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost is given. Then follows the anointing by the holy chrism, the white garment and the candle are received, and the newly baptized one is bid to go in peace.

We must try to understand those promises before we commit ourselves to them. What do you mean when you say, and what will you mean when you repeat after me: I do renounce Satan? You mean that you will have nothing to do with Satan, that you will scorn all his temptations, that you will think none of his thoughts, say none of his words, do none of his deeds, that you will hold him and everything that belongs to him in hatred forever, that you will have only one master whom you will follow in all ways, whom you will obey in all things, whom you will live for, whom you would gladly die for, and that Master is the Lord Jesus Christ who came to you to-day in Holy Communion. You are going to have no leader but Christ whom you will love more than any one, more than anything on earth.

What is the meaning of the second promise? It is almost a repetition of the first. "I do renounce all his works." Now the chief work of Satan is sin, his own sin of rebellion against God, and the

sins he has made God's creatures commit since. Among his works are all the impurities of life, all the pride of life, all the wrong desires of the flesh, all the idolatries, all the heresies, all the false religions, all the books and papers that utter blasphemies against Christ and the Church. These you all hold in contempt now and forever.

The last vow is: "I do renounce all his pomps." The pomps of the devil are all the means he makes use of to make whatever he teaches appear grand in the eyes of men. The Jews and the Pagans had to renounce his pomps when they became Christians and so did Christ when the devil showed Him all the kingdoms of the earth. So in this third promise you reject, you hate, anything that the devil may present in order to draw you away from Christ.

This renewal will be the final act of this grand first Communion day of yours. By this renewal you lift up the flag of Christ under which you purpose to live and die. On the folds of that banner are written your three baptismal vows, that is, your triple and absolute and eternal renunciation of Satan. Keep under that standard and you will be always on the winning side. Keep under it and I promise you without any hesitation, that one prayer made for you in Baptism will be heard. I will say it over you now and it holds the strongest wish of my heart for you: "Receive this white flag, which may ye carry without stain before the judgment seat of Our Lord Jesus Christ, that thou mayest have life everlasting. Amen."

III. A RETREAT BEFORE CONFIRMATION.

I.—INTRODUCTORY.

In three days you are going to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation and these days of retreat are intended to prepare you for the worthy reception thereof. I need not tell you how you are to make this little retreat as you have already made two retreats, one before your first Confession and another before your first Communion. I want you to do some thinking and much praying. You are older than you were on the two preceding occasions, and therefore better able to use your mind and because of that you ought to be better able to pray. You ought to pray better because you know how to use your reason in a more perfect manner.

Thinking and praying go hand in hand.

Thinking makes you understand better what you are doing. It makes you understand who God is to whom you pray, and how much you who pray stand in need of His assistance. You will always find that when you have to accuse yourselves of praying in an unbecoming way, it is because you did not realize either the majesty of God or your own need of the favors which you asked. To make proper use of your mind you must, if possible, be alone. If you are with others, they are in your way. Silence is necessary for thought. I recommend, therefore, that you keep yourselves in silence as much as it is in your power. If you follow this recommendation you will edify all your companions. Your parents, moreover, will be gratified, for they will see that you appreciate the greatness of the Sacrament which the bishop will administer to you, as well as the necessity of doing your very best to be ready for that day which I am sure will rank alongside the day of your first Communion as

among the happiest days of your life, be that life of yours short or long.

Pray much as well as think seriously.

No matter how earnestly you engage your thoughts about that which for the moment is of chief concern, it all will avail nothing without divine grace, which you can not obtain without asking for it. Prayer, as you know, is the asking of God what we desire. Many powerful minds, yes many geniuses have spent much of their leisure in the study of the things which bear upon man's relation to God, and God's relation to man. Yet all their study resulted so frequently in the most pitiful errors. There were many reasons for this, but I am inclined to think that one reason is that they did not pray, either because they did not know how, or because they were too proud to go down on their knees in submission to the Almighty. You know how to pray, and, certainly, you are not too proud to beseech heaven.

As we advance in the exercises of this retreat you will find how urgent it is for you to fit yourselves for Confirmation. The motive which is among the most powerful to induce you to put forth every effort during this precious time, is that you can not receive the Sacrament of the Holy Ghost a second time. If you make a failure now, the fact that your Confirmation was made unworthily can never be changed. You may obtain pardon for the sin, but it will ever be true that your Confirmation was not what it should be. It is something like life. You have only one life. If you bankrupt that life, no matter how you try or how you lament, that life can not be lived over again, and you must stand all the grave consequences of your mistake.

I do not wish you to think that it is impossible to repair the evil effects of an unworthy Confirmation. If I made you think that, I would be making you think wrong, I would be a false teacher ; but in

any case you would have to admit that there had happened in your life such an awful accident as a worthless and guilty reception of the Holy Ghost, in the Sacrament of Confirmation.

Let me explain here why this Sacrament, like Baptism and Holy Orders, can be received only once. The three Sacraments just mentioned can not be administered more than once because each of them leaves a mark on the soul which can not by any means be made to disappear. Confirmation makes you soldiers of Christ. To do this it places upon you a mark which is also called a character. It puts you aside from and distinguishes you from every one who is not a soldier. Once a soldier of Christ always His soldier. You may be a bad soldier or a cowardly one, you may even be a deserter, but still you are a soldier. As St. Augustine says: "Shall the Christian Sacraments do less than the badge or uniform of the soldier?" The mark is not stamped on his person anew, as often as he resumes the military service, but he is recognized as an old and approved soldier.

The character spoken of as stamped on the soul by Confirmation, is stamped so indelibly that it can never be effaced and therefore never will a new impression be needed.

You can readily see how indescribable is the condition of one who bears this stamp of Confirmation and who fails in his loyalty to his commander. But what are we to think of a soldier of the army of Christ taken prisoner by the enemies of Christ, and taken through his own fault and condemned to wear the badge of the Lord throughout all eternity in the dark dungeon of hell? What shame and what confusion and what disgrace will be his forever and forever? Such a lot is not going to be yours, my children. You are going to prevent such a doom by living as true and brave soldiers of Christ from now until the end of your lives. You are going to

prevent it by preparing during these days of recollection so to receive Confirmation that not only will the stamp of the Sacrament remain with you always here and hereafter—but remain in all its vigor, constantly imparting to your souls the grace of the Holy Spirit and imparting it so abundantly that not for a single moment in thought, word or deed will you prove yourselves anything but courageous fighters in the good cause of the Lord.

You know now what you have to do these three days, which are days of thinking and praying; you know, moreover, that the best reason why you should profit by them is that you can not be confirmed but once in your lives. To think well you need light, and to pray well you want faith and confidence. You will hence beg of the Holy Ghost, who is coming to you in Confirmation as Christ came to you in Communion, for light in the first place and for strength. With His grace you can do all things and the gracious spirit of God who is ever ready to assist you will, if you ask in the proper manner, pour into your souls the sanctity which is so necessary to receive Him in the fulness of His fruits and His gifts.

A thought most useful just now, is the thought of what this Sacrament is. When you know something about its nature, its institution, and its effects, you will feel more impelled to put yourselves in readiness for receiving it, the more, too, you will be convinced, that it is of the greatest moment to receive it with all the fervor possible. It is a pity that so many are found in the Church of God who take no pains whatever to benefit by Confirmation, and who neglect it altogether. Though it is not so necessary as Baptism and Penance and the Eucharist, yet you are told in your Catechism that whoever can receive this Sacrament and refuse to do so, not only commit a grievous sin, but, moreover, subject themselves to lose their faith, to abandon the practice of their religion and thus to risk the salvation

of their souls. This is why the Council of Trent insists upon having its nature, its efficacy and its dignity explained frequently to the faithful so as to make them sensible that not only is it not to be neglected, but that it is to be approached with the greatest reverence and devotion.

The word Confirmation, which is the name of this Sacrament, means that, by which one is made firm, made strong, made robust, made stable. And in reality this Sacrament does give one all these qualities of firmness, of strength, of vigor, of stability. It is something sacred which endows one with all the essentials of a good soldier of Christ. In fact everything belonging to the Sacrament, everything used and done and said while this Sacrament is being given, confers hints at fighting a good fight for a good cause and with courage and intrepidity. Everything in it promises not only strength to fight but security of victory. This is clear from the words employed by the bishop (who, except in rare cases, is the only one who confers this Sacrament), when he anoints with the Sacred Chrism: "I sign thee with the sign of the cross, and confirm thee with the Chrism of Salvation, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost," and thus gives a new virtue to the recipient who in this manner is made a perfect soldier of Christ.

Later on during these instructions each word used by the bishop will be explained in order that you may the better understand how grand this Sacrament is, and be moved to excite in your souls those emotions which will render you more and more fit to receive in their entirety all the graces which the spirit of God will impart to you on the day of your Confirmation.

The definition of your Catechism, properly comprehended, will allow you a clearer perception of the wonderful richness of the Sacrament. The definition you have learned is as follows: Con-

firmation is a Sacrament through which we receive the Holy Ghost to make us strong and perfect Christians and soldiers of Jesus Christ. Recall all that you have heard about the meaning of the term Sacrament. This word as you are aware has many significations. It is always something sacred. It is a very old expression and is found in the very earliest days of the Church. To use the language of many Doctors and Fathers it signifies "a sacred thing which lies concealed." Our eyes never see what is hidden, they behold only the sign which lets us know that there is more than comes to our vision.

If Confirmation is an outward sign of inward grace, if it is a sacred or mysterious sign, if it has been instituted by Christ, then it has a right to a rank among the Seven Sacraments of our holy religion.

Confirmation is all this. What is the sign, or rather what are the outward signs? They are the chrism, the anointing, the laying on of hands, and the slight blow given by the hand of the bishop. All these we can notice with our senses whenever we assist at the administration of the Sacrament. They are, therefore, outward signs. The chrism with which the bishop anoints the forehead, and which is made up of olive oil and sweet smelling balsam, which mixture is consecrated by the bishop and can not be consecrated by any one else, is a sign that lets you know that there is produced on the soul of the one confirmed an effect similar to the effect caused by oil on the bodies of those who use it on their limbs before they enter into contests in which they propose to display that they are more supple, and stronger, than those who are their opponents. Just as oil prepares the body for conflict, so the chrism strengthens souls and adds, too, the vigor to overthrow all those who may oppose, in the constant struggles they have to make in order to win the fight in

which the Christian soldier is constantly engaged as he marches under the leadership of his Redeemer, Christ.

As you were told, in the chrism there is not only oil but there is balsam which is healing and soothing and fragrant. How often will the soldier of Christ find himself weary and worn and wounded as he struggles in the onward and upward march of life! How often will he not stand in need of something soothing to restore his will and his mind to their elasticity and vigor and unconquerable determination! How often will not his spirit, in its moments of battle in which scars are received, how often will not his spirit cry out for some healing to pour into his hurts! This soothing, this healing, is always at hand and ready to be poured upon him by the divine spirit whom he received in other years with such devout preparation, with a preparation as devout as yours is going to be. Balsam is fragrant too, its odor is most grateful, and it means "that the faithful, made perfect by the grace of Confirmation, spread around them, by reason of their many virtues, such a sweet odor that they may say with the apostle "we are the good odor of Christians to God."

All this and more will the day of Confirmation bring to you. In prayer, therefore, to the Holy Spirit ask that there remain nothing in your souls to stand in the way of your becoming, through His help, strong soldiers and perfect Christians, whose lives will bring many by their beauty and fragrance to love Christ and to follow all the inspirations of the Paraclete.

II. THE GRACES BESTOWED IN THIS SACRAMENT.

You are endeavoring to get a clear notion of the Sacrament of Confirmation, in order to understand its importance as well as the necessity of being so well fitted for its reception, that there will be no hindrance to the Holy Spirit's entering and taking complete possession of your souls. You saw in the last instruction that the holy chrism signifies many of the effects of Confirmation, its strengthening power as well as the perfume of the many virtues which it produces, or sows the seeds of in the soul. It is a sign of other results. It brings to our mind, this oil and this balsam, the fulness of divine grace "which flows from Christ, the head, through the Holy Ghost, like the precious ointment on the head of Aaron, whom God anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows." Some say that balsam preserves whatever it embalms, and thus is a sign of the preservation of the soul from sin and its corruption.

There is no doubt that Confirmation is an exterior sign, and in this much preserves the first essential of every Sacrament. We can not say of this Sacrament, as we can of the Eucharist, just at what time it was instituted, but that Christ did institute it is beyond all doubt. It was given as a Sacrament in the time of the apostles. "When the apostles, who were in Jerusalem, had heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John, who when they were come, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Ghost. For He was not yet come upon any of them, but they were only baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid their hands upon them and they received the Holy Ghost" (Acts viii, 14).

This shows that Baptism was not enough to make one a perfect follower of Christ, but that the imposition of hands was also re-

quired by the apostles in order to finish what was begun in Baptism. Besides, the apostles themselves were confirmed, when the Holy Ghost came down upon them on Pentecost Sunday in the form of tongues of fire, and sat on the head of each. Here we find what may be considered as another sensible or outward sign—that is the imposition of hands. Christ by the imposition of His hands healed diseases. The fathers of the Church tell us that when Christ imposed or laid His hands upon little children He gave His apostles a figure of Christian Confirmation. We find also that since the very beginning, Confirmation was deemed a Sacrament, so that, though nowhere in Scripture is there mention of the time the Sacrament was instituted, we can not for a moment doubt that it was given to the Church by Our Lord, just as He left to His Church the other Sacraments which our holy faith professes to have been given for the salvation of mankind.

Confirmation then is a Sacrament on these two counts. It is an outward sign and Christ is its author.

Does it convey grace? This is the last question to be answered to determine that Confirmation is really a Sacrament. The reply is easy. In this Sacrament the Holy Ghost is received, the Holy Spirit of God, who is the fountain of grace and the sanctifier of souls. One might say that this Sacrament contains within itself all grace, since all grace comes from Christ through the Holy Spirit. Who says Holy Ghost, says holiness, and what holiness can there be without grace?

So you have arrived at the conclusion that Confirmation has everything necessary for a Sacrament, and you are ready to make an act of faith, on the authority of the Church and of Scripture, that it is a Sacrament, one of the seven of the new dispensation or of the New Law.

The doctrine of our holy faith in this matter is summed up in these words of St. Clement, a father of the primitive Church: "All should hasten," he says, "without delay to be born again of God, and then to be sealed by the bishop, that is, to receive the sevenfold gift of the Holy Ghost; for as we have learned from St. Peter, and as the other apostles taught in obedience to the command of Our Lord, he who through contempt and not from necessity, but voluntarily neglects to receive this Sacrament can not possibly become a perfect Christian."

You see how early the importance of Confirmation was impressed upon the minds of the faithful. All the grace of this Sacrament finds expression in the words "perfect Christian." You are not expected to remain always children in the faith. The Church sees to it that in your very young days the Holy Spirit fashions you into manly Christians. The fight for heaven begins with the dawn of your reason, and as soon as you are ripe enough, when you have reached say the age of twelve, in fact as soon as you are admitted to Holy Communion, your holy Religion sees to it, that by another Sacrament you are strengthened, and arms are placed in your possession. This strength and these weapons, weapons made for attack as well as defense, are manufactured in heaven and are put in your hands by the Divine Spirit. Your soul is in danger from the moment you are able to reason, and the sooner you are equipped for the great battle in which, your whole life long, you must stand up and combat for your salvation, the more courageous will your fighting be. The goodness of your religion is manifest in this, that not only are you taught how to fight, but everything is given you to make that fight a series of victories, which end in your being crowned forever among the angels and the saints.

Dangers will always beset you. You will soon discover, if you

heed, that you are never far away from the edge of the precipice. In fact the dangers grow as you grow, for temptations become more violent and more numerous. Your Church does not forget her children. Confirmation will support your trembling steps. It affords you all the needed help. It gives you the courage to confess God, and whosoever confesses Him will necessarily practise virtue under all circumstances. For what is sin but the denial in some or other way of the Creator? It is rebellion against heaven. Now no perfect Christian denies the Creator, and no genuine soldier ever commits treason, and all rebellion is treason.

You must notice, dear children, that every idea which comes, as you consider the blessings of Confirmation, but shows how you can never sufficiently appreciate it, and that these days of silence and thought and prayer are not lost time, since they are spent in preparing for an event which means so much for you, not only in this, but in the next world as well. You have had put before you the signs with some notion of what is signified, some notion of the things of which they are the signs. You have reflected on the necessity of Confirmation. You have been told why it is called Confirmation, that it was instituted by Christ, that it can be received once only, that while in some respects it bears a resemblance to Baptism, it is a totally different Sacrament, and given to the Church for another purpose altogether. It is not so necessary for salvation as is Baptism, but yet it might be said that in many cases Baptism without it would be of little avail.

It will be just as well to point out here that, as in Baptism, a sponsor, that is a god-parent, is required. Generally speaking, some one man is taken to be the godfather of all the boys and some one woman is selected to be the godmother of all the girls. These spon-

sors take upon themselves, in a measure, the same obligations toward those who are confirmed as is the case in Baptism.

Nor must it be forgotten that each boy and each girl receives a name in Confirmation, just as in Baptism. The name is always that of some Christian who has under the guidance of the Holy Ghost fought the good fight, and fought so valiantly as to be numbered among the saints whom it delights the Church to honor. The name you take ought to be very dear to you. It should animate you often to reflect upon the one who bears it now in heaven, to fly to that saint for protection, and to ask the grace that, as you are struggling under his patronage here, you may one day be a partner of his happiness in eternity.

The bounty of the Holy Spirit shines very brightly in Confirmation. Not only He gives Himself, and in giving Himself deluges you with grace, but He places Himself at the disposal of all. It is not thus with all the Sacraments. Holy Orders, for example, can not be conferred upon all. Many are excepted and prevented and disqualified, but Confirmation is a world open to every one who is able to grasp its significance, and is willing to enter it. The liberality of the Holy Spirit in this Sacrament is almost equal to the generosity of Our Lord in the Blessed Eucharist, and you know now how boundless that generosity is. Christ holds back nothing from you in Communion. He gives Himself entirely. The Holy Spirit gives you all it is in His power to give, and only keeps back those spiritual favors which are destined for those who are called, as bishops and priests, to His special service.

Everything about this more than excellent Sacrament strikes one with an idea of his own unworthiness. In fact, like all the sacred mysteries of the Church, the more one thinks, the more one is awed

to learn that he is allowed to approach it. Yet so it is. Not only are you admitted to partake of it, you are actually commanded to do so. If there is any explanation of this, it lies in the fact that God, while He loves us, knows even better than we do, how frail we are and how requisite His assistance is, and in spite of our ingratitude comes to our rescue in so many marvelous ways.

How wisely and how beautiful the Sacraments succeed each other! In the first of the Sacraments you are made children of God, you are re-born into His kingdom. When the real fight of life begins, you are armed, in Confirmation, from head to foot, armed to meet all the attacks of the devil and to repel them. If you are wounded in the struggle you have Penance, a Sacrament which, by the remission of sins, heals all wounds and removes all the scars of the soul. Lest you grow faint as the road becomes more and more difficult, and your enemies wax fiercer and fiercer, there is ready for you at almost any moment that splendid banquet at which you can restore your famished souls with divine food, with manna from heaven, in the adorable Eucharist. Then comes Holy Orders, a Sacrament which furnishes the Church with its ministers, its priests, and its bishops. Matrimony blesses husbands and wives, fathers and mothers, and enables them to love each other and to bring up their children in the affectionate fear of God. Lastly succeeds Extreme Unction, which brings divine aid to the dying man, and administers consolation and strength in that moment when the world and all its vanities are to be left forever, and he is to appear to give an account of every instant of his existence to his Creator.

Can you think of anything that God could have done for us which He has not done? God is present in all His Sacraments, and there is not a moment of our life in which we do not find Him ready to help us in any need or danger which may be ours. He is with us

always, you have already met Him and how often! You met Him in Baptism, in Penance, and in the Holy Eucharist. You may have neglected Him, but has He ever forsaken you? Do you think for one single second that He will ever abandon you, that you will look for Him and be unable to find Him? Now you are to receive Him and to meet Him in a new way. It will be the same God, but not the same divine Person. In two short days the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity will greet you, and enrich you with His favors. Let your prayers be: Come, Holy Ghost—come and fill us with that grace without which we are and we can do nothing.

III.—SOLDIERS OF CHRIST.

You are beginning, dear children, the second day of your Confirmation retreat. You were most attentive yesterday and, no doubt, you have already learned to appreciate how much it is in your power to do when you make up your minds to reflect and pray. You have perceived that by reflection and by prayer your souls will take on those conditions without which, even if you received the Imposition of Hands worthily, you can not obtain the fulness of the Holy Ghost. To-day, most certainly, you will continue to behave in the spirit which was yours yesterday.

Perhaps you will do even better. It is worth your while. In after years, when things may be clearer than they are at present, you will grasp more completely what an unspeakable blessing this Sacrament is. Not one of the effects of Confirmation must you miss. They are so laden with strength and light and courage. In a general way something has been hinted about them all, but more needs to be said. As you study these effects, you will increase your efforts to make every one of them yours. They all may be summed up in the expression so frequently used: perfect Christian.

Do you know of anything that can come into your life, any gift, any honor, any wealth, any distinction which may be compared with the gift, with the honor, with the wealth which is included in the meaning of that term? Do you know of anything you would sooner be than perfect Christians? Remember, besides, that being perfect Christians does not stand in the way of reaching any eminence to which your ambition may aspire. After all, what is anything you may acquire worth to you, if you are not perfect members of our Church? Is it worth so much after all to be a Christian if you are not a perfect one? If you are not a perfect Christian what

are you? All your resolutions of this retreat may be reduced to one: which is: "With the help of the Holy Ghost I am going to be a perfect Christian."

The help of the Holy Ghost is always with you and after Confirmation will be more abundantly with you. The Holy Ghost never has and never will desert you. If you fail in living the only life worth living, the life of the perfect Christian, it is the fault of yourselves and of yourselves only. Ask yourselves once more what kind of boys and what kind of girls, what kind of youths and what kind of maidens, what kind of men and what kind of women are you going to be if you are not perfect Christians? If you are not, how much good will you do in the world? If you are not, is it not true that the world would be better without you? If you are not, do you not cause rather harm than good in the world? There is a possibility of your being a curse to yourselves and to all those with whom you come in contact. Surely there will not be much consolation for you in your hour of death, if you are obliged to smite your breast and say: My whole life has been a wretched failure, and it were better for me and perhaps for others on my account, that neither they nor I were born. There have been and there are and alas! there will be, such lives even among those who call themselves Christians.

Do you not see how much the resolution spoken of above means for you? Do you not see that such a resolution, taken with all your strength combined, with the strength which will be added to your human, your natural power by the Holy Ghost, means days passed in the Spirit of Christ, and all of these days leading to a final, blessed day, when, in all confidence, you will commend your souls, as Christ commended His on the Cross, into the hands of your heavenly Father!

The life of the perfect Christian is such a life as Christ lived, and the death of the perfect Christian is such a death as Christ died. Since to be a perfect Christian means all this, it is no wonder that you are so frequently asked to bear it in mind during these days of preparation. The sacred and mysterious signs exhibited in Confirmation do not merely show what is the nature of the graces conveyed, but these begin in a way which is beyond our comprehension to produce these graces. Besides perfecting the grace of Baptism, which is the first grace which all Christians receive, this Sacrament remits sin if after Confession made in the Catholic spirit any sin remains. It confirms you in your faith and makes you strong and proud to confess and glorify the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ. It also increases the store of grace which your souls may already possess.

A proof that Confirmation does everything that is claimed for it, is found in the history of those who were the first to have administered unto them, by way of the Sacrament, the Holy Ghost. Remember how weak were the Apostles during the Passion and after the Ascension of the Lord. They were afraid, while their Master was enduring the terrible agony and sufferings in the garden, as He carried His Cross, and while He hung on the Cross. They forsook Him when He needed them most, they fled; and Peter denied, actually and cravenly denied Him three times. When He ascended into heaven they hid themselves through fear of the Jews and concealed themselves for ten days, behind closed doors. But at last, on the glorious day of Pentecost, they were confirmed. Immediately on receiving the Holy Ghost what changed men they became! "Suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a mighty wind coming, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting; and there appeared to them parted tongues, as it were of fire, and it sat

upon every one of them, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost and they began to speak with divers tongues, according as the Holy Ghost gave them to speak" (Acts ii). The whole of Jerusalem was in amazement. They could not recognize that these men, now so bold, were the men who were known as the chosen followers of Christ. Peter, undismayed, stood up and spoke to them. He was a new man. He faced the whole city and did not hesitate to tell those assembled what they were and what manner of crime they had committed in putting to death Christ. He proclaims, as if he impeached fearlessly the whole nation of the Jews and all the authorities of the great empire of Rome, that they were wicked men, and were made more wicked because they had slain and crucified Jesus of Nazareth. He stirred all those who heard him to sorrow for the sin in which they had participated and he bade them save themselves from this perverse generation, to do penance, to be baptized, and to receive the Holy Ghost.

This courage was found among all to whom the gift of the Holy Spirit was imparted. Not one of the twelve upon whom at Pentecost the Holy Ghost came down, but traveled here and there, to the furthest points of the known world, preaching Christ, living like Christ, and in the end dying for Him. Were they not perfect Christians and were they not made so by their Confirmation? Many holy men and women since, holy men and women without number, have followed in the footsteps of the Apostles, have sold all they had and lived for Christ only and thought it the highest glory that could be theirs, to suffer and to die for their Redeemer. Once more they were perfect Christians, Christians made strong and courageous and generous by the grace they received through the Holy Ghost in Confirmation.

You must reflect that the Holy Ghost who strengthened the

Apostles, who made brave the martyrs and virgins and confessors of the Church, is the same Holy Spirit who the day after to-morrow will give Himself with all His gifts to you. Think well of this, my dear children.

Consider what a rich opportunity is before you to renew your souls, to cast out of your heart every affection that inclines you to prize the things of the world, to purify your thoughts and actions so that the Holy Spirit will perform in some degree the wonders operated by Him among the Apostles and disciples of Christ and among Christians in all ages even up to the present time.

As you were told all that belongs to this Sacrament impresses you with the necessity of approaching it with piety and devotion. True piety and true devotion are nothing else than a sinless soul, a conscience free from all reproach, a heart and a will ready to answer to all the suggestions of the divine spirit. The signs tell us much, the words teach us more.

There are some acts performed by the bishop which are not to be forgotten. Kneeling, you will receive the unction from the hands of the bishop who will sign your forehead with the sacred chrism. Notably on the *forehead* is this unction made, because henceforward you are to walk fearlessly and unashamed, declaring to the whole world that you have been made soldiers of Christ, and that you are going to rally around Him undeterred by fear or human respect. On the contrary, it is going to be your proudest pride to be known always and everywhere, by everybody, as belonging to the army of which Christ is the Commander.

The spirit inspired by Confirmation is the soldier spirit and hence anything that savors of weakness or timidity or cowardice or treason is absolutely banished from the whole tenor of your lives. It is thought a distinction to enlist for the defence and the protection

of one's country. But is it not more signally honorable to enter the ranks to fight for the Church and for Christ? Not only is the honor a more distinguished one, but the soldier of Christ who is the Christian made perfect by Confirmation enjoys advantages which no other soldier enjoys. Consider the leaders of battalions, what are they compared to the one who commands the warriors of the Cross? They all make mistakes. Christ makes none. They are never certain of victory. Christ is always sure. What a difference between the causes which are headed by Christ and by those who command in the contests of this earth!

How insignificant the end in view in all the wars that mortals have been engaged in, alongside of the purpose of Christ?

In one case there is question of a smaller or larger extent of territory here below; in the other of the vast and everlasting kingdom of heaven. In one case there is a struggle for what belongs to time and passes with time; in the other, for what is immortal.

In one case you have souls, in the other the perishable things of the world.

Christ, moreover, rewards every one engaged under Him, the whole field of battle, every phase of the struggle is clearly before Him. He sees every blow struck, every wound received, so that when the hour comes for summing up the results of the combat, He places on every faithful bosom the badge of honor and whispers into every ear words of approval and praise. He forgets no one because He sees every one and has been a witness of every detail. He forgets nothing because everything has been visible to His all seeing eye. Then, no matter how many wounds, no matter how many deaths, there is always victory with Christ.

Is it so with the armies of the nations? It is really an insult to

ask the question. The commanders know not everything that takes place on the fields where their soldiers are fighting. In spite of the best laid plans many a deed of valor is unremembered, and many a soldier lies in a nameless grave. This is not said with a desire of censuring, it is said simply because so it is, and it can not be helped because the greatest commanders in history are, taken at their best, men only and can do only what it is in the power of man to do.

It is not necessary to push the comparison any further. Every one is able to do that for himself. After the unction with the chrism and the sign of the cross, the one confirmed receives a gentle slap on the cheek from the hand of the bishop to remind him, as says the Catechism, "that as a courageous champion he should be prepared to brave with unconquered resolution, all adversities for the name of Christ." In another instruction there will be given a brief explanation of the words used by the bishop.

Enough has been said to make you at least begin to realize the grace of graces which is in store for you. Somebody's soldier you must be. What chieftain then will you choose? What kind of a soldier do you wish to become? A brave and loyal one or a cowardly and faithless one? Ask the Holy Spirit to make you perfect Christians, that is, courageous champions of the Cross.

IV. THE SIGN OF THE CROSS.

The prayers said during the administration of the Sacrament, for which you are endeavoring with piety and devotion to prepare, are full of instruction and furnish you with many inspiring thoughts.

The Catechism tells you that the bishop gives Confirmation in the following manner. He extends his hands over those who are to be confirmed, prays that they may receive the Holy Ghost and anoints the forehead of each with holy chrism in the form of the cross. While he anoints he says: "I sign thee with the sign of the cross, and I confirm thee with the chrism of salvation, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

You understand, without doubt, the meaning of each word of the invocation of the bishop. You are signed on the forehead, as you have already been informed, to bring home to you the lesson that you must openly profess and practice your faith, never be ashamed of it and rather die than deny it. This open profession does not mean that you should everywhere publicly announce that your religion is that of the Catholic Church. You are always under the obligation of acknowledging your creed whenever it is necessary. You should never neglect to perform any work that would indicate your religion when that work is a work of precept. By going to Mass on Sundays and holydays of obligation, by abstinence on Friday you declare to all who see you that you are a Catholic. To refuse to observe either of these laws, because others might come to know what Church you are a member of, would be a sin against the very end of the grace of Confirmation. Many are tempted to be in this way ashamed of their faith. Such a temptation you must resist with all your might and, no matter how hard it may sometimes

be, be sure that the Holy Ghost in His special Sacrament will pour into your soul the strength sufficient to overcome.

Besides, my dear children, why should any Catholic be ashamed of being recognized as a Catholic, or be ashamed of obeying the laws of his religion? Is there anything disgraceful in being a Catholic? Is there anything in the history of your religion to be ashamed of? The greatest men, the greatest minds, the greatest monarchs, belonged to it and it worked no dishonor either to their dignity, or their minds, or their wonderful deeds. In fact their lives were beautiful and grand in proportion to their fidelity to their faith. A few centuries ago nearly all the kings, princes, and great men of the earth were Catholics. All the saints were Catholics. All the popes were Catholics. At present over two hundred and fifty million people are Catholics. This Church was founded when Christ, Our Lord, was on earth, and is nearly two thousand years old. All the other churches are only a few hundred years old.

“We ought, therefore, to be proud of our religion for which and in which so many noble persons died. We should feel proud that we are Catholics, while Protestants should feel ashamed in our presence for they have deserted the true standard of Christ, and followed some other leader who set up a religion of his own in opposition to the true Church of Our Lord. They will not have the cross or crucifix, the standard of Christ, in their churches, or houses, or about their persons, and yet they claim to be Christians redeemed by the Cross.” (Kinkead.) You are signed with the cross. Consider all that it means to kneel and be signed with the cross by the touch of the bishop. How much that sign means for you! You have been making that sign upon yourselves ever since you can remember, but on your Confirmation day it will, when made

upon your forehead by the minister of the Sacrament, mean more than ever it did in the past.

Once more it will be your confession, in the face of all who behold, indeed of the whole world, in the mysteries of the Trinity and of the Redemption. It will be as if you said I believe in the Trinity of God as well as in His Unity. I believe in the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

Please linger fondly now and on the day of your Confirmation, and ever after, please linger fondly on the name of the Third Person, on the name of the Holy Ghost, who is soon to make you perfect Christians, that is soldiers of Him whom the same Spirit divine descended upon, and whom the Father sent to redeem a sinking world by the ignominy and the passion of the Cross. The Cross on that day will be handed to you by the Holy Ghost, as your flag to love and die under. Think of all the Cross means for you.

The Cross is the banner or standard of Christianity, just as the stars and stripes is the flag of your country. Your flag shows what country you belong to, the Cross what religion you belong to. You are willing to die for your flag and you should be glad, if called upon, to die for the Cross. You would allow no one to insult your flag, you should allow no one to insult the Cross, above all you should not offer it any outrage yourselves. But the Cross is more than the flag of your country. It is a reminder of all that has been done for you by your Redeemer. It is a memento of His wonderful love for each one of you, a love so great that He hesitated at no sacrifice in order to save you. He died on the Cross to build your Church, to give you all its treasures, especially the Sacraments. He went through all the ignominy of the thirty-three years in order to pass through human death and the grave, and thus ascend into

heaven, where His first visible proof of His solicitude for you was the sending down the Holy Ghost for whose advent in your souls you are now so earnestly preparing.

After doing all that He did as the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity made man, it was as if He thought He had not done enough and so sent the Third Person of that adorable Trinity, to complete and make perfect the work of your sanctification.

Of all this and of much more that can not be detailed you are reminded by the sign of the Cross.

This is so at all times, but in a very particular manner will it be so during the ceremony of your Confirmation. It will have a particular signification on that occasion. You are receiving the Holy Ghost, but it does not mean that for the rest of your days you are going to be free from danger and temptation. God, the maker and monarch of all things, is coming to you in the person of His Divine Spirit, and He is coming laden with gifts. In spite of all this, however, He is not going to promise you a long life, or a life of ease and pleasure, or one of fame and wealth, or even freedom from cares and tribulations. These may all come to you, in a measure, but you can not be sure of them, and you may rather be confident that this existence of yours may be full of risks, and trials, and sorrows. Yes, you may take it for granted that, as you live on after your Confirmation, difficulties of many kinds will harass you.

This is why you are made soldiers. What use is a soldier if he is never going to be engaged in battle? You may accept it as very probable that your way will be beset by obstacles of all kinds. Of this, on that day, will the Cross remind you. It will admonish you that there is only one way heavenward, and that is the way of the Cross. Your Captain was crowned with thorns; is it reasonable for

you to expect that you are going to wear garlands of roses, with the thorns withdrawn?

"Perfect Christians" is your motto and your resolution. You will be cautioned, no matter how hard the saying may be, you will be cautioned to deny yourselves, to take up your Cross and to follow Christ. This is a hard saying, truly, but, as the author of the "Imitation" (II, 12) remarks, it will be much harder to hear that last word, "Depart from me ye cursed into everlasting fire." Read when you go home to-day the twelfth chapter of the Second Book of the "Following of Christ." The author's words will come home to you on the day you are awaiting so impatiently:

"They who now love to hear and follow the Word of the Cross shall not then fear the sentence of eternal condemnation. The sign of the Cross shall be in heaven when the Lord shall come to judge. Then all the servants of the Cross, who in their lifetime have conformed themselves to Him that was crucified, shall come to Christ, their judge, with great confidence. Why then art thou afraid to take up thy cross which leadeth to the kingdom? In the Cross is salvation; in the Cross is life; in the Cross is protection from enemies."

Yes, read that chapter as attentively as you can. It will explain in simple language that the road of the Cross is really royal. It will show that in the Cross there is heavenly sweetness, strength of mind, joy of spirit; that there is no health of soul nor hope of eternal life but in the Cross. It will encourage you to take, from your young years, the way of the Cross, for "He is gone before thee, carrying his Cross and he died for thee upon the Cross, that thou mayest also bear thy Cross and love to die on the Cross." You will learn that everywhere in this world you will meet the Cross. "Go where thou wilt, seek what thou wilt, and thou shalt not find

a highway above, nor a safer way below, than the way of the Cross. Dispose and order all things as thou wilt, and as seems best to thee, and thou wilt still find something to suffer, either willingly or unwillingly, and so thou shalt always find the Cross."

Young as you are, you will be obliged to confess that all this is true. Young as you are you have had experience enough to prove to you that no one escapes trials of body, or of mind, or of both—that is, no one can fly from the Cross. It is well then to carry it willingly, it will then carry thee. "Dost thou think to escape the cross which no mortal ever could avoid? If thou flung away one cross, without doubt thou wilt find another and perhaps a heavier."

It is a long chapter, but it is so true and comes home to each one of us so closely, that one is tempted to read on to the end. This much has been said about the Cross because it is your all. All living is a success or a failure as we fail or succeed in carrying our cross. When we recall that the road we have to travel unto salvation is really bristling with crosses we feel inclined to ask ourselves how will it be possible for us to go on to the end without being overcome. Of ourselves we would be powerless, but our Father who is in heaven promised through His Son that He would not leave us orphans, and hence do we discover ready for us at every step of our existence some other Sacramental grace, on which we may rely for the strength necessary for us to get the best of our enemies. Among those graces is eminently that grace that the Holy Spirit, on a day that is coming nearer to you the whole time, will arm you with according to the measure of your fervor.

Is there any need to make any further remarks on the words of the ceremony? Most of you remember them from your Catechism, and all that you need do is to repeat and repeat them, and while repeating them to take into your hearts and your minds all their signi-

ficance. There remains but one day more of your little retreat. Because to-morrow is the last day, let it be the best. No matter how well you have done so far, and indeed you have done famously, never be satisfied. You have thought well, think even more seriously. You have prayed well, pray even more earnestly.

Send up all your petitions to the Spirit of light and strength. Ask Him to penetrate every corner of your souls so that you may detect the slightest obstacle to His influence. Ask Him to fortify you with that strength which is the strength of God and which, if you do not oppose it, must make you strong enough to bear any cross that may be sent you. Bear it as long as the Master wishes it, bear it cheerfully, live on it and above all die embracing it and thanking your Maker for His mercies without number.

V. THE OFFERING.

With this instruction, children, you begin the last day of preparation for the great to-morrow. Needless to tell you how important it is that this be the most fruitful day of your little retreat. It must be a day full of desires and prayer. It must also be a day of resolution. Certainly the Holy Spirit, who in a few hours is going to give Himself to you with all His gifts and fruits, expects and has every right to expect something from you in return. What does He ask of you? Is it something which can be purchased only at a great price? Is it something that you will have to travel long distances to procure? Is it something which you have or have not in your own possession? Does He call for gold or silver or precious stones?

What He is eager to have you give Him can be bought by no money. You will have no journey to make to procure it. It is something over which each one of you has entire ownership, something which you can do with as you please. It is not gold nor silver nor precious stones. You have all guessed what it is, what that is which the Holy Spirit esteems more highly than anything else here below, for which He would give everything that the earth holds, for which He has done so much already and which if you do not surrender to Him you will, to use the strong words of St. Paul, grieve Him exceedingly. It is something He made out of nothing, made beyond the reach of death, something glorious, something splendid. It is that which Our Lord says is worth more than the universe. It is that which He made for Himself and yearns to have for Himself in happiness for all eternity.

You have conjectured that the only return you can make to Him for all the favors He intends bestowing upon you to-morrow is your

soul. Your soul is yours to do as you wish with. You may lose or you may save it. It is of so much value that if you lose it, everything is lost; if you save it, everything is saved. "What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" That it is yours to bestow is clear to you.

What will happen if you refuse your soul to the Holy Ghost? What will become of it? To some one it must be surrendered. If the Holy Ghost has it not in His keeping, then it is in the keeping of the devil, or of the world, or of the flesh. The devil wants it and ardently desires it, only to destroy it, only to imprison it away from God forever. The world can not do much for it save fill it with vain and unholy desires, and in the end neither care for it, nor save it, nor pray for it, nor even think of it. The flesh only degrades, loads it with impure wishes and foul thoughts. The flesh can only reduce it to the slavery of the body. So that when the body dies, the soul will die with it and die an everlasting death.

Study this out, to somebody in this life, and in the next, your soul must belong. To whom will you give it? What do you say, now that you are in your sane minds and are trying to weigh things as they should be weighed? Will it pay to hand that immortal soul over to your most bitter enemies? Will it in any way pay?

Let us suppose that you have a long life of success and pleasure, that the world smiles on you continually. Will it pay if in the end you are lost? Not only it will not pay, but it will be enormous and irreparable loss. At once you see that there can be no hesitation for you. At once you see that the thing for you to do is to deliver up your souls unconditionally to the Spirit of God.

Your soul, your Catechism tells you, was made to the image and likeness of God, it tells you that your soul is like God because it is a spirit, that it will never die, it will last as long as God Himself, that

it has understanding and free will. Your soul is like to God, and therefore reflects the image of the Holy Ghost, and because of that likeness the Holy Ghost loves your soul and wishes it entirely for Himself, and He will confirm you in order that He may prove to you His astonishing affection for your soul, in order that He may prove to you that He has done all that He could to secure it, so that if He holds it not, the fault is yours and yours alone.

When you are asked to give up your soul to the Holy Ghost it means that you abandon it to Him to fashion as He pleases. He will give light to your understanding, whereas the world and the devil and the flesh can do nothing but fill it with the gloom of error and the foulness of impurity. He will take your free will and restore it to you with all its liberty untouched, but strong to will what is right and to reject with contempt what is wrong. Your heart He will enthrone Himself within, and there will reign supreme and you will love what He loves and hate what He hates. You will be renewed by His embrace, and you will go down from the touch of the bishop new boys and new girls.

You went up children, you will come down men and women, or rather you will come down soldiers of the Lord, that is, perfect Christians.

Now examine yourselves. Go down into your souls. What are they like to-day? Are they white? Without sin? Above all are they without habits of sin?

Be not discouraged, whatever you may see in those souls of yours. One wave of grace and though they were as scarlet they will be washed whiter than the driven snow.

Penetrate your hearts. What find you therein? You discover wishes, desires of all kinds, do you not? You perceive that there are some things you love, some things you hate. That is as it should be.

Your hearts are made to love and to hate. As you love and as you hate, so you live. Your lives are colored beautifully or hideously according to the objects your hearts go out to, or steel themselves against.

Be not easy with yourselves. What do you love, what do you hate? Do you love anything that is liable to turn you against the law of God? Do you desire anything which, if you obtain, may imperil the salvation of your soul?

If there be such a dangerous leaning in your affections, make up your mind to banish it at once. From to-day begin. You can do it. If it remains there, you may anticipate much vexation of spirit in the future. To-day is your golden hour. You are as yet too young to have become slaves to any passion. Still, habits grow stronger by indulging them. Every act which you perform at the dictate of an evil propensity adds but another link wherewith to make the chains that bind you heavier and stronger. There is no slavery like that of sin. Of sin, especially, that becomes a habit. Such a slavery is merciless. It does not care for you, it cares for itself only. When it gets the upper hand it will drive you to every excess, the consequences of which God alone knows. Now is your opportunity. Study yourself. Take your stand. Expel everything in your inclinations which may thwart the operations of the Holy Spirit.

To-morrow morning, then, present your hearts to the Holy Ghost empty of everything. Leave no nook or corner of them unsearched. The presentation must be entire, and then when the Spirit of God comes to you He will take possession of everything. With that Divine Spirit there will come not only strength, but also sweetness. You will understand the meaning of the words that the yoke of the Lord is sweet and His burthen light.

You can not think to-day too frequently of all this, for you can not

think too frequently just now that this is the time which the Lord has placed within your reach, which more than any other time is peculiarly fitted for commencing a new life—the life of perfect Christians—in such a way, in such a determined way, that even your arch enemy himself will feel that you are not going to be numbered among his victims.

What is well begun, you have heard many a time, is half done. This is very true of the Christian life. Start in boldly, generously, and your march through this earthly pilgrimage will be undoubtedly victorious. Be brave soldiers from the very start. Tell your own souls that life is real, life is earnest. Be ambitious. Be on the look out for promotion. Promotion here means going higher and higher in virtue, means becoming more and more vigilant, more and more courageous. Tell your own souls that you are not going to be laggards, cowards. You will not run needlessly into danger, but being in peril you will make your opponents fear you.

If you approach Confirmation in these dispositions there will be no apprehension about the future.

Suppose that all our Catholic boys and girls would go out from their Confirmation animated by this spirit. How strong, and yet more glorious than she is, would Mother Church become in the eyes of the world! Children newly confirmed and filled with such sentiments would be young apostles. The world would be astonished at them, would wonder, then admire, and then proclaim that the religion which can shape such men and such women must assuredly be divine, and the only religion that can save the world. Think of all this, children! Consider how much to-morrow can do for you, and through you, for the honor and glory of God, and the rescue of souls. Certainly motives sufficient have been put before you to

induce you to make of yourselves a complete offering to the divine Spirit.

Enough has been said to make it clear to you that Confirmation is a stupendous Sacrament, a Sacrament of the greatest moment to you, a Sacrament which can effect so much for you during all your career, a Sacrament for which no preparation is adequate. After this instruction you will begin to prepare for Confession. You know how much a good Confession can do for you toward rendering you disposed for the reception of the Holy Ghost. You know that a good Confession depends on a searching examination of your conscience, on an honest avowal of all your sins, their degree and their number, on a sincere, that is a heartfelt contrition, and on a determined and unconquerable purpose of amendment. The absolution of the priest will do the rest.

Some time when you go to Confession you have no feeling of sorrow. It is not at all necessary at any time to feel sorrow. We can not control, we can not command our feelings. They come to us unbidden. The best proof that your regret is real, lies in your purpose of amendment. Can any proof that you hate sin be stronger than that which you manifest every time that, with all the force of your will, you repudiate every wrong thought, word, or deed, of which you may be guilty, and your resolve with the same firmness never to repeat those offenses against the law of God? Worry, therefore, not about your feelings, but rather about the fixity of your purpose.

Your best preparation will be your Confession of to-day. Spend all your energy on ridding yourselves of every stain, so that to-morrow when the Holy Spirit contemplates your soul, He will find it a place in which He will delight to take up His abode. Not only will He be delighted to dwell therein, but He will enrich it with the abundance

of His fortifying grace. Does it not seem strange that it is only the Holy Ghost from whom you can expect the help to confess well, as well as the assistance necessary to receive Him in a Christian spirit? Strange as it may seem, it is true, for that august Person alone can prepare you for Himself. Remember you are going to entertain a God and only a God is rich enough to furnish you with the means of entertaining such majesty in a becoming manner.

Pray to the Holy Spirit. Let your soul speak out to Him all that is in it. Beg of Him, through the intercession of the saint whose name you are going to take, through the heart of the Immaculate Mother who received Him more perfectly than any mere creature ever did or ever will, through the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ, to come to you, to cleanse you, to enlighten you, and to strengthen you and impart to you the courage to be, not only to-morrow, but forever, perfect Christians and valiant soldiers of the Church.

VI. GOD THE HOLY GHOST.

This is your last instruction before Confirmation. Much has been said about the nature and effects of that Sacrament, but very little of that third Person of the Blessed Trinity whom it contains. The Holy Ghost is mentioned by name very frequently, but how few stop to ask themselves who that august Person is. In fact they think very little about Him and they know very little. Some are like those people mentioned in the New Testament, who, when they were asked if they had received the Holy Ghost, answered that they did not even know there was a Holy Ghost. This should not be the case.

The Holy Ghost is God, and therefore has had to do in some way or other with us, not only since we were born, but also from the beginning of the world and even before. In fact we have been in His mind during all eternity. Besides, we Catholics make so frequently the sign of the Cross. There is hardly a prayer of the Church which does not include Him by name. Then there is that feast of the Church, the feast of Pentecost, a feast as memorable as the Easter festival. It may be said that Christ laid the foundation and built the walls, but the Holy Ghost completed and beautified the structure of the Church of which you are members.

We never can know much about the Holy Ghost, but the little we do know is enough, when dwelt upon seriously, to enable us to learn His infinite love for us and to apprehend what our duties toward Him are. What does your Catechism say about Him? Enough, be sure, to make us wonder that we have been so careless in trying to realize His divinity and His majesty.

We never pray so well as when we pay undistracted attention to the words we use when we pray. How many times you have made

the sign of the Cross, and what little meaning the words Holy Ghost had for you! You must not fancy that the sign of the Cross is of no consequence, that it makes little difference whether you make it or not, or how you make it. It is not to be regarded as a mere gesture. You sign yourselves at the beginning of your prayers. Does it mean that that sign is not a part of your prayers? Why, it is an important part. Its purpose is to make you pause and reflect upon what you are about to do. You are going to pray or do some other work, and you are going to proceed in the name of each Person of the adorable Trinity. In their Name, that is with their blessing, their command, their help. It is a call upon the Blessed Three to bend down and listen to you. It is an admonition to you that They are looking upon you, see all your thoughts and all your most hidden motives. It is a warning to you that the prayer you are going to make must be worthy of them, that is, as worthy of them as it is possible for a limited creature to render it. All this and more is the sign of the Cross to you.

With what reverence you should utter those holy Names and now, from this moment forward, you are to name the Holy Ghost with more fervor than ever before. You are going to be devout, henceforward, with a special piety to the Holy Spirit who to-morrow will bestow Himself upon you, will arm you for the battle of life, will send you forth to fight and be with you in all your encounters with the foes of your soul.

Again go back to the teaching of your Catechism. The eighth article of your creed is: "I believe in the Holy Ghost." What is the meaning of the words Holy Ghost? They mean Holy Spirit. But God the Father is a Holy Spirit and likewise God the Son. True, but in virtue of what we learn in the Old and in the New Testament, and in the doctrine of the Church, this name which is common to the

first and to the second Persons is used exclusively to designate the third. So much for the name. But the Holy Ghost is God—God of God, true God of true God. There is only one God, but in that one God there are three Persons. They are distinct from each other. The Father is truly God, the Son is truly God, the Holy Ghost is truly God. Yet there is only one God. The Father is not the Son, the Son is not the Holy Ghost, and the Holy Ghost is neither Father nor Son. This is a mystery. We can not understand, we can only adore.

It is enough for you to know that He is God and therefore created you and baptized you, and is going to sanctify you, if you place no hindrance to His workings. If you could read the beautiful things said of the Holy Spirit by the Doctors and the Fathers and the Saints of the Church! You sing sometimes a hymn to the Holy Ghost. How have you sung it? Did you remember that a hymn is a prayer. Do you recall now any part of that hymn? Yet that hymn, which so many grown-up people delight to hear the children chant, is full of pious and affectionate appeals to the Holy Ghost. If you do not think of any particular prayer to make to the Holy Spirit, repeat the words of that chant.

Though your Catechism does not say much about the Holy Spirit of God, it teaches you enough to make you consider yourselves as highly favored in being allowed to receive Him as He is coming to you to-morrow. You remember that the first Confirmation occurred on the Sunday we call Pentecost. The Paraclete, or Consoler or Comforter, as the Holy Ghost is sometimes called, was sent by Christ to sanctify His Church, to enlighten and to strengthen the Apostles, and to enable them to preach the Gospel. This shows you the particular office of the Holy Ghost among men. He is the gift of Christ to His Church. He enlighteneth every one who cometh into the

Church. He is constantly working throughout that Church—He is with the rulers and the ministers of our holy religion and with all the faithful. The Supreme Pontiff, ever since the beginning, has been under His special protection. Guided by Him, the Pope can not err. Through Him he is infallible in everything that he teaches Catholics concerning faith and morals. Through Him all sacramental power is given to bishops and priests. Every pious thought comes from Him. He inspires every good resolution and fortifies every one who makes appeal to Him. You, my dear children, have never performed an act of faith or of hope or of love or of contrition, you have never conceived a holy thought or framed a virtuous resolution save through Him. He it is who has suggested every idea to you during these days of retreat, every idea of self amendment, every desire to approach Him fully prepared.

Could more be urged to make you realize what a sublime function is exercised by this divine Spirit in keeping the gates of hell from prevailing against the faith of Christ, and He will be with that faith of ours until the consummation of ages? Is it not highly proper to style Him God's gift to the world? He is in the world all the time and is stirring up thoughts in minds outside the Church which if followed will bring them to the way, the truth, and the life. He is a gift which includes all gifts that are worth having. Hence He is the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and fortitude, the Spirit of knowledge and of piety, and the Spirit of the fear of the Lord. He is as a flourishing tree which casts its shadow over the whole world and from which are hanging, for men to pluck, those fruits that are so refreshing and without which this world would be a desert indeed, those fruits of charity, joy, peace, patience, benignity, goodness, longanimity, mildness, faith, modesty, constancy, chastity.

These gifts and these fruits have all been explained to you. What are all the presents, which it is in the power of the world to bestow, compared with these? Indeed what would the world be were it not possible for a man at some time or other in his life to reach out his hand and take them? What would the world be without them while we live, and above all what would existence be without them when we come to die? These fruits, my dear children, are yours to gather to-morrow, yours to keep and brighten your lives with, and to be nourished thereby and strengthened against any and every calamity which may overtake you. Do try and understand this. Do try and realize the good things to-morrow has in store for you. Once more cast out from your souls everything that may prevent you from possessing all this wealth in its marvelous abundance. Beg and beg again the great Spirit to come even now, not in a sacramental way, but by the way of His grace, and make you so ready that all His magnificent wealth may be yours and forever yours.

You have been drilled in all that you have to do during the ceremony. You know the hour you are to come. Be here on the minute. You know when you have to kneel and rise and go up, and take your place at the feet of the bishop. All that is needful has been shown you and no doubt your execution of these directions will be perfect. Before you are confirmed, that is before you approach the altar, keep yourselves in prayer. Busy yourselves with all the thoughts that have come into your minds during these days of meditation and prayer. Chiefly employ that brief space before your Confirmation in acts of faith, of contrition, and desire. Continue these sentiments while you are being confirmed and when you have returned to your places give thanks to the Holy Spirit for His infinite condescension in coming with such divine munificence to poor unworthy you. Let your gratitude be from the very depths of

your hearts. Let it show itself in your promises, your resolution. No need of many words, no need of many resolutions. One resolution is sufficient—the resolution so constantly insisted on during these days—the resolution “I am going to become, with Thy help, a perfect Christian.” But in that resolution put all your will, all your character. Pledge yourself to the Holy Spirit. Be ashamed to fail Him.

Nearly two thousand years ago the Sacrament of Confirmation was administered in an amazing and a peculiar manner. It was administered to the Apostles and to their queen, our beloved mother, and it was administered publicly, so that all Jerusalem saw it and wondered. It may be said that the minister of that Confirmation was the Holy Spirit, just as Christ was the first minister of the adorable Eucharist. Recall that scene to-morrow. Try to enter into the thoughts of Mary as she was awaiting the great advent. Make the thoughts of the Apostles your own.

Two sentiments should be yours while you are waiting. A sentiment of surrender and a sentiment of fearless confidence. Tell the Paraclete in the words of a saint, “Take, O Holy Ghost, all my liberty. Take my memory, understanding, and will. Whatever I have Thou hast given me, and to Thee I restore it, and deliver it to be governed by Thy will only. Grant me Thy love and Thy grace, and I am rich enough, nor will I ask for aught else.” Then make an act of absolute trust. Say to your benefactor: Beloved Father of my being and yet my Master, I put myself into Thy care to-day and forever. Come weal, come woe, sickness or health, fame or infamy, suffering or pleasure, life or death, confiding in Thee I am not afraid. Let me but feel the clasp of Thy arm, but see the light of Thy smile and I will sleep on Thy bosom in peace. Do what Thou wilt for and with me. How canst Thou harm me, loving me as

Thou dost with an infinite eternal and unselfish love? Holy Spirit, even though Thou shouldst slay me still shall I trust in Thee. May these be your sentiments, children, and may the Holy Ghost bless and love and keep you all forever.

VII. THE SEVEN FRUITS.

This morning, dear children, your happy day arrived. It is nearly over now, and very shortly it will be a thing of the past. You must never let the memory of it die. It has too much significance for you. It has been a day of too much gain for you to forget it altogether. The Holy Ghost came to you just as really as, so many years ago, He came to the Apostles. You received the same Holy Ghost, the same Holy Ghost with the same gifts and the same fruits. He imparted of His grace much more abundantly to them than to you, because their mission was a sublimer one than yours and their work more difficult. Otherwise there is no difference. It was the same Holy Ghost who gave courage to the martyrs, young and old. Remember, there were many boy and girl martyrs. It was the same Holy Ghost who preserved the Virgins in their purity. It was the same Holy Ghost who fortified the Confessors and all the Saints who are honored on the altars of your Church.

You are not saints, you are not martyrs, nor are you apostles as Peter and Paul and the others were. Yet, in a way you have a mission and a work. Your mission is to prove by the virtues you practise how much the Sacrament can do for human nature in elevating it and making it stronger than all the temptations of the world. Your work is to forge ahead through difficulties of every kind, until you reach the kingdom of which Baptism made you heirs and Confirmation made you soldiers. Besides, who knows what particular task may be yet yours to perform? Some of you may in future years become priests. Perhaps one or two of you may be consecrated Bishops. Some of the girls may become nuns. Both nuns and priests are in their degree apostles since it is their appointed

duty in life to glorify the Church and bring salvation to souls. A vocation may spring up on a day like this. The Spirit of God makes His own choice, and it could easily be that a call to the priesthood or to the religious life may have been heard by some of you to-day.

Confirmation Day is a wonderful one, and on it the Holy Spirit does marvelous things with souls and lays down the foundations of many saintly and eminently useful lives. It is a day full of suggestions, full of inspirations. It is, as you have been so often informed, the real commencement of the Christian life. Spiritually you are grown now. You can utter no complaint if life grows full of trials heavy and sore, trials which shake souls. You can utter no complaint, because not only have you been forewarned, but you have also been forearmed. Heaven can do no more for you. You know where you can always repair for light and strength. The Divine Spirit, with all His power, has come to you and He will abide with you until you bid Him away. Even after you have rejected Him, again He will come back to you, if you beseech with a humble and contrite heart.

The gifts which became yours to-day are numerous and are priceless. They are valuable beyond all reckoning. So much so that it would be impossible to say which is of more worth than another. It will not be amiss to think over those seven invaluable possessions which were made yours this morning, to think over what they are and how rich they will make you. You will need every one of them as you proceed along the journey of life. There is *wisdom* which makes you wise in the things of God, gives you a distaste for the vain things of the world and teaches you to direct your whole life and all your actions to the honor and glory of God. *Understanding* enables you to know more clearly the mysteries of your faith. *Counsel* is a warning against all the deceits of the

devil as well as all the dangers to salvation. *Fortitude* makes you strong to do the will of God in all things. *Knowledge* helps you to discover the will of God in all things. *Piety* inclines you to love Him as a Father and to obey Him because you love. Lastly, the *fear of God* implants in you a dread of sin and the desire to suffer anything rather than to displease Him even in the slightest degree.

Wondrous gifts these are certainly. It is very hard to make a distinction between them and to say which excels the other. Certainly you must cultivate them all, that is, use them all to the best advantage. The two mentioned last are piety and the fear of the Lord. Perhaps it would not be exaggerating to say that these two embrace all the rest. Most surely it is true that if you exercise piety and the fear of the Lord you will in all your acts so plan your life that it will be a life of wisdom and knowledge and understanding and counsel and fortitude.

You have been told many and many a time that the surest way of never offending God is to love Him. There are so many reasons why you should love God, the chiefest of which is that He has loved you from all eternity with an infinite love. "Behold," says the Lord in Holy Writ, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love" (Jer. xxxi). He has never grown tired of you. His loving arms have been about you day and night since the hour of your birth, and nothing in heaven or earth can harm you as long as He holds you in His embrace.

More than father or mother has He loved you. His love has been so unselfish. Yes, He yearns for our hearts, but in reality what doth it profit the Almighty to be the object of the most ardent human love? Whatever we do for Him through love, while it testifies to our obedience and thus honors Him, means very little, if

anything, to Him, but only renders Him more lavish of His favors to His creatures.

So, my children, let love for the great, good, infinitely bountiful Maker prompt you during your whole life, not only in a general way, but in the minutest details of your activity. The Holy Ghost has sown richly in Confirmation to-day the seeds of that love in bestowing upon you the gift of piety. But notice well that while conferring piety He also endowed you with another gift—the gift of the fear of the Lord. So you must love and fear at the same time. There must be love in your fear and there must be fear in your love. You must love in such a way that with all your love you are afraid by some fault of yours to lose God. You are to fear Him, but in all your fear there must be mingled love. Hence is it said the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. It is only the beginning. It is not the whole wisdom. To fear God so as to lose all trust in Him is no wisdom at all, but on the contrary, is extreme folly. The two gifts must go hand in hand, otherwise the results will be either overweening confidence or utter servility.

You must never forget that you are God's children and not His slaves. You have been brought here this afternoon in order to recapitulate profitably the gift accorded you this morning, in order to impress more deeply upon your minds the memories of this eventful day. In earlier days there were some customs which formed part of the Confirmation ceremony. They were not essential and to-day have been dropped altogether. There was given a kiss of peace to signify that one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit was that peace which is a foretaste of heaven and surpasseth all understanding. They used to bind a fillet or band which covered the forehead in order to keep untouched the spot blessed by the Sacred Chrism. There was one intention in all this, which was to keep

vividly before the minds of those confirmed the significance of the Sacrament.

After your first Communion you were called together in order to renew your promises of Baptism. We will renew them again to-day. No need to tell you that if you are faithful to those promises you will be in very deed perfect Christians. You are committed now, in the sight of men, and by the very nature of your Confirmation grace, to prove yourselves Catholics not in name merely, but in reality. You have taken a pledge to obey your Church in all its laws. If you accustom yourselves while young to a careful compliance with the precepts of your religion in every detail, there will be great reason to hope that as you advance in life you will still be faithful.

There are some practices which are recommended to you in a very special manner, and according as you adhere to them is your Catholicity beyond doubt, or under suspicion. There is the Sunday Mass and the Mass on holidays of obligation. Resolve now never to miss Mass. Put everything else aside in order that this precept may be fulfilled. Make no excuse for yourselves. To absent yourselves from the Mass on days on which the hearing is obligatory, you must have a grave, a very grave reason indeed. What is your week going to be if you do not bring down upon it the blessing of the Holy Sacrifice? It will be a week begun in sin, and God alone knows how it will end. You can not calculate the immensity of the benediction which will come to you and yours by fidelity to this law of the Church. There are, thank God, men and women who will travel any distance and face any weather rather than miss Mass. There is no doubt that God will favor at the hour of death in a particular manner whoever is in a position to say that never in all his life did he willingly absent himself from the Mass of obligation.

Then there is the abstinence on Fridays. Abstain always, my dear children. Never take it upon yourselves to excuse yourselves. Let no human respect deter you. People will not think any the less of you if you are scrupulous on this point. They may smile or even laugh at you, but in their heart of hearts they will respect you. The Mass and the Friday abstinence afford you many opportunities of manifesting yourselves true Catholics.

Can you doubt, while showing yourselves brave for the sake of your religion and your conscience, that God will remember your generosity? God will never be outdone in liberality. So, whether at home or abroad, with friends or with strangers, during the working year or during vacation, be steadfast in your determination to go to Mass when obliged by the Church, and to abstain from meat on Fridays. No surrender on this point, anywhere or at any time or before anybody.

There is another resolution which you must add to the foregoing two—the resolution, namely, to say your morning and evening prayers. Not only are you to say them regularly, but you are to say them with attention, with piety and with devotion. They are prayers and not recitations. They must be said with the heart as well as with the lips. They need not be long prayers. Kneel down, make the sign of the Cross, then quietly recite the “Our Father,” the “Hail Mary,” the Creed. In the morning you might add an invocation to St. Joseph in which you will ask him for the grace of a happy death. Then raise your Confirmation Flag—resolve that all day long you are going to be perfect Christian soldiers, that there will be no sin in thought, word or deed. Another sign of the Cross and go cheerfully to the business of the new day. At night you may say the same prayers, only closing with an act of contrition for all the sins of your life as well as of the day just closed.

How long do you think these prayers will take, even when said with all attention and devotion. Just one hundred and twenty seconds, that is, just two minutes, in all four minutes a day. Four minutes daily! Is that too much time to give to God? Is that too big a price to pay for your everlasting happiness? Yet heaven will be yours if you keep to those resolutions, to those promises which, in addition to your baptismal vows, you are now going to make by way of some small return for the signal favor of your Confirmation.

May the Holy Ghost, who is in you, strengthen you in these purposes and thus make you perfect Christian soldiers and in the end crown you with the glory which never fades.

Appendix of Stories and Examples.

I. CONFESSION.

HE WAS NOT SINCERELY SORRY.

There was a certain man in Paris who did not lead a good life. While he was in good health he daily added sin to sin, and banished from his mind all thought of death and judgment.

But when he became ill, and saw that he was soon to die, he entered into himself and made a Confession of his whole life, with many tears flowing from his eyes. Then he received the Holy Viaticum and Extreme Unction with every outward mark of piety, and gently breathed his last.

People were glad when they heard of how he had repented before his death. They said: "That was indeed a fortunate man, for he enjoyed the pleasures of this world, and had also by a happy death secured for himself the glory of Heaven."

But man sees only what happens outwardly; God beholds all that passes in man's heart. A few days after his death he appeared to a holy servant of God, and said to him: "Do not pray for me, for I am in Hell."

"What!" exclaimed the holy man; "did you not confess your sins with sorrow? and did you not receive the last Sacraments with devotion?"

"It is true," replied the lost soul, "I did confess my sins, but I did not hate them as I ought to have done. I even thought to myself that if I recovered I might with pleasure do them again. God does not pardon sins unless one hates them above all other evils. I did indeed hate and detest my sins with my lips, but not in my heart,

and I was not forgiven. I am lost forever." Saying this, he disappeared.

O my child, hate sin, then, as it is the greatest evil in the world, because it offends God, and brings eternal ruin to all who yield to it.

EVERY SIN FORGIVEN WITH TRUE REPENTANCE.

There was once a woman whose life was a scandal to all who knew her. One day she was passing through a church to shorten the road to the place whither she was going, when she saw a large multitude of people entering with great haste as if something of unusual importance was about to take place.

Filled with curiosity, she joined the crowd, which at every moment became greater, until the edifice was filled in every part, and she found herself surrounded on all sides, so that, even if she had so desired, it would have been impossible for her to retrace her steps.

In a very short time a venerable missionary appeared and ascended the pulpit. The subject of the sermon he preached was upon the goodness of God towards sinners, and he frequently repeated these words: "My brethren, every sin can be forgiven; God will forgive every sin if only the sinner be truly sorry."

The woman listened with great attention to every word of the sermon, and especially to those she heard him so often repeat. As soon as the sermon was ended she forced her way through the crowd and drew near to the preacher as he descended the pulpit steps.

She touched his sleeve with her hand, and asked him: "Is it quite true, Father, that God will forgive every sin?"

"Nothing is more certain, my child," he answered, "if only the sinner be truly sorry."

"But there are many kinds of sinners; some have done less than others, and some are exceedingly wicked; does God pardon all without distinction?"

"Most certainly," replied the Father. "Provided they all detest their sins God will forgive them all without any distinction."

"Would He forgive even me?—I having during fifteen years lived a sinful life, committing every day enormous crimes."

"Without doubt, my child, God will forgive you if you only repent and be resolved for the future never to sin again."

"If your words are true, Father, be pleased to hear my confession. Appoint any hour which will be most suitable to you, and I will not fail to come."

"I can hear your confession at this very moment. Come at once"—and he pointed out to her where his Confessional was and told her he would be with her in a few moments.

The poor sinner knelt down and poured forth in his ears all the abominations of these many years.

Before leaving the Confessional she said to him: "Father, could you conduct me to some place of safety near at hand where I might spend the night, as I fear that if I returned to my own house at this hour I might be in danger of relapsing into sin by meeting my former companions in evil?"

The Father answered that it would be difficult for him to do this at that hour, and encouraged her to return home under the protection of God.

Still she was afraid to do this, and preferred to remain all night in the church, that she might the more surely escape all danger.

Early next morning, when the doors of the church were opened, they found her lying lifeless on the ground at the foot of the altar of Our Lady, with her face upon the floor, which was wet with the

tears she had shed. She had wept so much and so bitterly for her sins that her heartfelt sorrow had deprived her of life.

The missionary, having been apprized of the event, easily recognized his penitent of the previous evening, and in his heart admired the greatness and mercy of God.

JOSEPH IN DANGER.

The patriarch Joseph, when a young man, was one day, without any fault on his part, in a dangerous occasion of sin. Someone came up to him suddenly, and asked him to do what would offend God. Joseph saw the danger at once, and, without as much as speaking, ran off as fast as he could. The tempter ran after him and seized him by the coat to bring him back. But Joseph, throwing off his coat, ran away, leaving it in the hands of the person who was tempting him, and in this way he escaped the danger.

O my child, how many have fallen into sin because, instead of flying away as Joseph did, they remained in the danger. Be not foolish like them, but rather imitate the saints who are now safe with God because they always ran away when they saw themselves in danger of offending Him.

"RISE AGAIN."

A hermit, having fallen through human frailty into several faults, went to Siloe, one of the great fathers of the desert, to ask him what he should do.

"My child," he answered, "you must rise again from your fall."

"But, my Father, I have already done so, and I have fallen again."

"Well, just rise again once more."

"And how often must I thus rise again?"

"As often as you fall," replied the Father. "Rise again always as

long as you live, because when the hour of your death comes, it will find you either standing or lying down, and carry you in that position before the sovereign tribunal of God."

May God grant, my child, that when that terrible messenger comes to you, he will find you standing, that is, in the grace of God, for your sentence then will be that of the just.

A GOOD RESOLUTION AND ITS RESULTS.

A young boy, who had made his First Communion only a few months previously, had been sent by his parents as an apprentice to a trade they had chosen for him.

On the day of his First Communion he had taken one great resolution, which at all hazards he was resolved to keep. It was this: "If by some great misfortune I should happen to fall into a mortal sin, I will go to Confession before I retire to rest on that very same day."

This misfortune did occur. It was on a Saturday, and the weather was exceedingly stormy; moreover, the priest lived at a considerable distance from the place where he dwelt.

The tempter, who had been the occasion of his fall, suggested to him that he might easily delay his visit to the priest for a few days, considering he dwelt at such a distance and the weather was so unpropitious.

But suddenly recalling to mind his promise, he seemed to hear deep down in his soul a voice—perhaps it might have been that of his angel guardian—which urged him to go immediately: "Go to Confession at once: do as you promised."

For a moment he hesitated, but only for a moment. Falling down on his knees, he said a "Hail Mary," to obtain the grace of knowing the Will of God, and of following it.

His short prayer ended, he rose from his knees and set out for the church.

On his return he met his godmother, who inquired of him where he had been. He told her all, with joy on his countenance. "I could not go to sleep," he said, "until I had become reconciled to God."

His mother was accustomed on Sunday morning to allow her children a longer time for repose than on other days. According to her custom she went to the door of the little room in which he slept to awake him. A quarter of an hour afterwards she went again to see if he had risen; she knocked again, but received no answer. She then opened the door, and found him still in bed, asleep, as she thought.

"Rise quickly, you lazy boy," she said, as she approached the bed. "It is half-past seven o'clock. Are you not ashamed?"

But seeing that he heeded her not, she took his hands within her own: they were cold. With terror she looked more closely at him. This look told her all. She screamed and fell on the floor insensible.

The child was dead, and his body was already cold.

How fortunate for him that he had not delayed going to Confession!

O my child, learn from this example never to delay one instant returning to God if by misfortune a mortal sin has separated you from Him. Make immediately an act of contrition, and go to Confession as soon as possible.

THE VISION AT THE CONFSSIONAL.

One day a servant of God was praying in the church at a time when many people were going to Confession. He saw them going into the Confessional one by one, and coming out after they had made their Confession.

God at the same time opened his eyes that he might see the state of the soul of each of these people. He saw some going in whose souls seemed black and ugly; they came out white and beautiful. These were they who had gone into Confession with mortal sin on their souls, and had come out forgiven.

He saw others going in black, and come out still blacker and more hideous. These were the sinners who had made bad Confessions.

Others again he saw who entered the Confessional white and beautiful, and come out shining with greater beauty and splendor. These were they who had not committed any grievous crime, but in whose souls there were venial faults; they had by virtue of the sacramental grace given by absolution obtained pardon for them, and an increase of grace which made them more and more beautiful before God.

JOY OF A HOLY MONK AT DEATH.

St. Alphonsus recommends every good Christian to make an examination of conscience every night before retiring to rest, and of making a sincere act of contrition, and assures us that this is a devotion which will give us great consolation at the hour of death.

It is related that a certain devout monk, when at the point of death, was told by his Superior to prepare for Confession.

"Blessed be God," he answered, "I have for the past thirty years made an examination of conscience every night, and I always make my Confession as if I were at the point of death."

How happy are those, my child, who imitate his beautiful example!

THE JOY OF A GOOD CONFESSION.

It is related that a certain man had committed a great crime, and although his mind was filled with remorse, and although he was most unhappy, he could not make up his mind to go to Confession. He saw Hell open beneath his feet, and he could neither eat nor sleep.

When he had lived in this sad condition for about ten years, he met on a journey a priest, with whom he entered into conversation. One of the things of which the priest spoke was the happiness that follows a good Confession, and how grateful we should be to Jesus Christ for giving us so easy a means of living a happy life.

The man, on hearing these words, showed by his troubled countenance that he was unhappy. The priest said to him: "My friend, perhaps my words have grieved you, or have brought to your mind some sad remembrance."

"Yes," he replied, "I am indeed unhappy."

The priest spoke to him with the utmost kindness, and soon learned the cause of his trouble. "Come with me," he said, "I will soon remove from you that heavy weight that oppresses you." Saying this, he led him to the nearest church, and made him go to Confession.

As soon as he had received absolution, he came out of the Confessional, and leaped and ran about as one who had suddenly become demented.

"What is the matter?" asked the priest in alarm.

The repentant sinner answered: "It seems to me that I could almost fly up to Heaven, for I feel so free and happy. During the last ten years I lived as if I had been already in Hell. But at this moment I feel as if I were in Heaven, I am so happy."

"MEMENTO MORI."

It is related that a certain man of noble family and brought up in comfort and in the enjoyment of the things the world esteems great, was one day touched by the grace of God with the desire of repenting of his past sinful life, and of living for the time to come as a good Christian in the world ought to live.

As he was too well known in his own country, he formed the design of going to Rome, and of making his Confession to the Holy Father himself.

The Pope was much moved by this act of confidence, and readily consented to hear his Confession: moreover, he was even edified by the exact manner in which he made it, and with the marks of sincere repentance he gave and the happy dispositions he manifested.

When the moment came for the imposing of the penance, the gentleman refused to accept any of them; they were not to his liking. "I am not strong enough to fast," he said, "and I have no time to read and pray much. You cannot expect me to go into solitary places to make long meditations, nor to undertake pilgrimages to holy shrines, for the occupations of my state of life leave me no time for these pious works. Neither can I take the discipline, nor lie on a hard bed, for these things would injure my health. And, above all other things, these works you desire to impose on me are, I must confess, not such as a man occupying my position would be expected to undertake, and are not suitable to a person of my condition in life."

The Holy Father in his wisdom then, in place of the penances usually given, contented himself by making him the present of a ring, on which was engraved these words: "Memento mori" (Remember that one day you must die), saying at the same time:

"Wear this ring on your finger, and read at least once every day the words that are engraved upon it."

The man was at length satisfied with the short penance given him, being one also he could so easily perform, and returned home with a peaceful conscience.

But this penance, simple as it was, soon produced within him a great change. The continual sight of the ring, and the daily ejaculation, "Remember that one day you must die," brought the thought of death frequently before his mind.

"Alas!" he said to himself one day, "since I am condemned once to die, the only thing I have to do in this world is to prepare to die well. Of what use is it for me to take so much concern for my health, which must so speedily forsake me? Of what use is it for me to spare my body and treat it so carefully, since it must so soon pass into corruption and become the food of worms?"

When he had for a short time made these reflections, no penance ever seemed to him to be too severe. He gladly accepted whatever was imposed on him in satisfaction for his past misdeeds, and persevered in these happy dispositions till the day of his death.

THE GIRL'S MISTAKE.

A girl was once listening to a sermon. Among other things she heard the priest say, that if people want to make a good Confession they must be more sorry for their sins than for anything else. When the sermon was over the people went away. The girl remained behind. She went to the priest and said, "Please your reverence, I think I made a bad Confession." "Why do you think so?" answered the priest. "I will tell you," said the girl. "You said in your sermon to-day that if we want to make a good Confession our sorrow

for sin must be greater than our sorrow for anything else. When I went to Confession I remember that I did not cry for my sins. But when my poor mother died I remember that I cried very much. So I am afraid that my sorrow for my mother's death was greater than my sorrow for my sins." "Answer me one question," said the priest. "Tell me, if you could bring your mother back to life again by committing a mortal sin, would you commit a mortal sin?" "Oh, no," said the girl, "I would not commit a mortal sin for anything." "Then," said the priest, "you love God really more than your mother." "Yes," answered the girl directly. "Then do not be afraid. Although you cried for your mother's death and did not cry for your sins, yet you were really in your heart more sorry for your sins than for your mother's death."

THE BUNDLE OF STICKS.

A monk, told by a young man that he had tried to correct all his faults, but without success, replied: "I am not surprised; take that bundle of sticks and break it in two." After one or two useless efforts, the young man replied it was impossible. "Truly," said the monk: "but untie it, separate the sticks and you'll be able to break them separately. So with your faults; attacked all at one time you can do nothing with them; take them one by one, and you'll succeed."

THE THREE CHILDREN.

A father had three children to whom he entrusted the care of three little lambs. One day, as they were asleep, wolves came forth and bore away the lambs. On seeing this the children began to

weep and were inconsolable. Their grief arose in this way. The eldest said: "I weep because my father will beat me for allowing the lambs to be carried off." The second said: "I weep because father will punish me, and also because he will be grieved to learn the loss of his lambs." The youngest wept more than the other two and said: "My father will be greatly afflicted, and I would rather be punished all my life than cause him such pain." The first of these children is the Christian who has only a servile fear, sorrow based on purely natural grounds: the second and third represent sorrow grounded on supernatural motives, the last being the perfect contrition.

VISIT TO A PRISON.

Supposing we went to a large prison and found a number of unhappy beings laden with chains, condemned to painful work for twenty or forty years, or perhaps for life. We say to them: "The Governor, in his goodness, is willing to shorten the time of your punishment, or even to remit it altogether, on condition of your saying a short prayer, or doing some simple work of piety, short and very easy. If you accept the condition, the doors of the prison will be opened to you and you can at once rejoin your family." Would there be one of these prisoners found to refuse such easy conditions? These prisoners are mankind, all debtors to the justice of God. The prison in Purgatory. The sufferings of this life are as nothing to the sufferings of Purgatory. These we can shorten or escape altogether by gaining indulgences. Who can fail to see how salutary is the practice of trying to gain them!

II. HOLY COMMUNION.

THE SACRILEGIOUS JEW.

In the year 1290, a poor woman lived in Paris, who, in order to purchase some food, pawned her cloak for thirty pence in a Jew's shop. Some days before Easter she entreated the Jew to lend it to her, that she might be able to repair to church to comply with the Easter duty. "With pleasure," said the Jew; "I shall not even require it back, if you bring me a little of the bread which you call your God: I wish to see if it be God." The woman agreed, and then went to receive the Paschal Communion. When the Holy Communion had been given her, she, without being perceived, concealed the sacred Host, and brought it, according to agreement, to the Jew. When he received it he placed it on the table, cut it with a penknife, and immediately blood flowed from it. His wife became very much alarmed, and made every effort to prevent him from proceeding further in the work of blasphemy. But he would not be restrained. He now forced into the Host a nail, and it bled again: then he cast it into the fire, and it came out entire. At last, he dipped it into boiling water, and no sooner had he done so than the water appeared red, as it were, with blood. The Host was soon seen to come up from the water, and appear in the form of a crucifix. This extraordinary occurrence amazed the Jew, and he withdrew in the greatest astonishment. In the meantime his son, who had just gone out, said to some boys whom he saw going to church, that there was no use in going to adore their God, as his father had just killed Him. A woman who was then passing by, hearing the jest from the

boy, entered the house, beheld the sacred Host, which was still hovering around the place, and when she appeared, descended into a small vessel which she carried in her hand. The woman at once took it to the church, and placed it in the hands of the priest. The bishop of Paris, being informed of what had taken place, ordered the Jew to be arrested, who, confessing his crime, received the punishment which he merited. The Jew's wife and children became Catholics, and were baptized. The miraculous Host was preserved with the greatest care at the church of St. John-of-Greve, where it was to be seen previous to the Revolution. In the year 1295, a citizen of Paris built an oratory called the miraculous chapel, on the site where stood the house of sacrilege.

THE COUNT OF HABSBURG.

Rudolph, Count of Habsburg, one day following the chase in the mountains in Switzerland, perceived a poor priest who was much embarrassed to cross a stream swollen by rain; he had to cross it to bring the holy Viaticum to a sick person. Immediately the noble count alights from his horse, makes the priest mount him, and follows himself on foot with much recollection. The priest afterwards wanted to give back his horse to the prince, but the latter answered: "I do not deem myself worthy of ever again mounting a horse which has had the honor of bearing the Lord of lords; it is from Him that I hold in fief all I possess." And so saying he left his beautiful courser at the service of the poor priest and his Church. The report of this so edifying event was soon noised abroad through the valleys of Switzerland, and thence into the provinces of the German Empire; it everywhere caused a pious joy to all the people, great and small.

VITIKIND, OF SAXONY.

Vitiking, Duke of Saxony, while yet a pagan, being at war with the Emperor Charlemagne, was curious to know what took place in the camp of the Christians. It was the Easter season, when all the Christian army made their Easter duty. Disguised as a pilgrim, Vitiking entered the camp. He witnessed with admiration the ceremonies of the Sacrifice of the Mass, but was very much astonished to see in each Host that the priest presented to the people a most beautiful infant, surrounded with brilliant light, who seemed to enter the mouths of some persons with great joy and entered most reluctantly the mouths of others. This miraculous vision, which shows the different dispositions with which Christians receive Communion, caused Vitiking and his subjects to embrace the religion of Jesus Christ.

THE HOLY NUN'S DESIRE.

One day a holy nun, who lived in the convent with St. Teresa, and who tenderly loved Our Blessed Lord, said to the saint: "O my mother, I wish I had lived at the time when Jesus Christ was on earth; what a joy it would have been to have seen His face, to have heard Him speak, to have been near Him, to have gone about with Him, and perhaps to have had the happiness of speaking to Him; Oh, I am sure I would then have been a saint!"

St. Teresa smiled. "My dear sister," she answered, "have you forgotten that Jesus is still on earth, and that He lives near you—yes, in the house with you, and often in your very soul, and that you see Him, and can speak to Him as often as you like? Is not Jesus with us in the Most Holy Sacrament? Why, then, do you

wish to have lived long ago, since that same Jesus who lived with Martha and Mary lives also with you?"

These words revived the faith of the good nun; she no longer regretted that she had not lived during the time of Our Lord's mortal life, since Jesus was always so near her.

"HE IS THERE."

A little English boy heard that Jesus was present in the holy tabernacle, and that He listened to the prayers of those who went there to speak to Him. One day he went to the church to pray for the conversion of his father. Going into the sanctuary, he climbed upon the altar, and sitting there, near the door of the tabernacle, knocked at it with his little hand, saying: "Are you there, Jesus."

But there was no answer. He knocked again, saying the same words: "Are you there, Jesus? They told me at Sunday-school that you were here."

He listened for an answer, but still no answer came. "Perhaps the dear Jesus is asleep; I will quietly awake Him." "O my dear little Jesus," he said gently, "I believe in Thee and I love Thee; answer me, I beseech Thee."

Jesus could not refuse to answer the simple and humble prayer of the child, said with so much confidence. A voice came forth from the tabernacle saying: "Yes, My dear child, I am here. My love for you makes Me stay here always. What do you want of Me to-day, My dear little brother?"

The child answered in a voice broken by sobs: "My father is not a good man; O my Jesus, make him good, and he will serve Thee and love Thee!"

"Go, My dearest child; I will grant your prayer."

The child went home all radiant with joy ; Jesus had told him that his prayer would be granted. On the following day his father, of his own accord, went to the church, made a good confession, and became a fervent Christian.

My child, that same Jesus is present on the altar in your own church. He is there because He loves you, and because He desires to bestow on you great graces. Oh, then, when you go into the church, kneel reverently and lovingly before the altar, and say to Him: "My dearest Jesus, I firmly believe that Thou art really present on this altar, and I love Thee with my whole heart."

JESUS SAID, "COME."

When the holy Curé of Ars was instructing his people on the great mystery of the love of God, he said: "Go then, to Communion, my children; go to Jesus with confidence and love. Has not the Divine Saviour said: 'Come to Me, all you that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you'? Can you resist an invitation so full of love and tenderness? Do not say: 'I am not worthy.' It is true you are not worthy of it, but you need God. If Our Lord had regard to our worthiness, He would never have instituted His beautiful Sacrament of love, for no one in the world is worthy of it: neither the saints nor the angels in Heaven, nor the archangels, nor even the Blessed Virgin; but He had in view our needs, and we all are in need of it. Do not say that you are sinners, that you are too miserable, and for that reason you do not dare to approach. I would as soon hear you say that you were very ill, and, therefore, that you will not take any remedy, nor send for the physician."

My dear child, these words and the example of all the saints and the loving words of Jesus Himself, should take away from us all

fear when we are preparing for Holy Communion, and should make us cast ourselves into the arms of Jesus without reserve. Jesus has lovingly said: "Him who cometh to Me, I will in no way cast out." Say, then, to Him: "In Thee, O Lord, do I put my trust."

THE SOUVENIR OF HIS FIRST COMMUNION DAY.

"Oh, mother, I am so happy to-day. I would like that this day should never end."

These were the words a little boy ten years of age said to his mother as he sat by her side on the evening of his First Communion day.

"My dearest boy," said his mother, Madame de Kerflac, "these happy days in this world are rare, and they pass away as others do. It is in Heaven only that we shall enjoy that perfect happiness that will never end.

Alain de Kerflac crossed his arms on his breast, and said in raising up his eyes towards the heavens above him, in which the stars were now shining with great brilliancy: "Oh, how I even now wish to be in Heaven with God!"

"And would you leave your mother alone and disconsolate in this weary world?"

"No, mother beloved," said the boy earnestly; "you will come with me, for you know well that your little Alain can have no happiness without you."

"But, my dearest child," the mother answered, "we must before all things else do the most holy will of God. This is what you promised your beloved Jesus this morning when for the first time you received Him in Communion."

Alain was the only child of the Countess of Kerflac, who had some years previously lost her husband. She had been the mother of

three other children, whom God had called to Heaven in their innocence.

Hence we need not be surprised at the great affection she had bestowed on him. But, being a Christian mother, she did not spoil him by over-kindness, for she knew that there is nothing so injurious to a child as to bring him up in this way.

Alain therefore grew up gentle, obedient, and pious, and was remarkable for his unaffected politeness, for politeness is the twin-sister of charity. He was open and generous in his behavior, and his lips were never sullied with a lie.

That same evening of the day of his First Communion, before retiring to rest, his mother took off the badge he wore at the altar in the morning, and which he was privileged to wear all that great day—the pure white silk badge, the emblem of innocence and joy—and pressing it to her lips with a tear in her eye, she said to him: “My dearest Alain, preserve this badge as long as you live, and when the storms of temptation arise around you—for to you, as well as to the rest of mankind this life will be a perpetual warfare—it will remind you of the promises you have made to-day. And if it ever come to pass that you have wandered from the path of virtue, promise me, my child, to return to it again, and to live always in the practices of our holy religion, which I have taught you.”

Alain at these tender words of his mother threw himself into her arms, weeping. “Oh, my beloved mother, how can you ever imagine that I would ever cease to love that religion which has given me so many and so great joys to-day? Yes, my dearest mother, I promise you. This little badge I will keep as my most precious treasure; it will always be dear to me, and it will always remind me of this happy day.”

A few minutes afterwards Alain de Kerflac was sweetly reposing

in his little bed. Before retiring for the night the Countess looked long and lovingly on her beloved boy, sleeping peacefully and, no doubt, dreaming of the happy day, alas! so quickly ended, and as she impressed a motherly kiss upon his innocent brow she silently prayed: "May he always be like this, O my God!"

Alain grew up a strong and healthy boy, and in due time reached his twenty-first year. He remained faithful to the promises he had made his mother and the resolution he had taken on his First Communion day. His mother's heart rejoiced as she watched him, still so fervent, so pious, and so good; and again her prayer ascended heavenwards: "May he always be like this, O my God!"

But at this time an event occurred that filled the young man's heart with grief. One day, after they had returned from a long walk, the Countess became suddenly ill, and in three days she was brought to the brink of the grave. The best physicians were called in by the son to attend her, and no expense was spared to prolong a life so dear to him. The hour appointed by Divine Providence had come: she herself perceived this, and without delay began to prepare for her passage into eternity. "All is now finished with me so far as this world is concerned," she said to her son. "Go and bring hither the priest of God, that I may receive the last Sacraments."

The priest came, but his work was light, for had she not daily been preparing for this her last hour? The only cloud that seemed to cover her otherwise placid features was the thought that her beloved Alain would be left behind her in a world of danger. But was he not the child of God, as well as hers, and did not He love him more, infinitely more, than she did?

Her last words to him were: "Oh, my child, remember always the promises you have made to God, and as long as you live keep the little white badge of your First Communion."

A few moments afterwards Madame de Kerflac fell asleep piously in the Lord, and Alain, plunged in grief, threw himself weeping on all that was left to him of her who was so dear to him.

When the funeral was over, Alain went to Paris, where one of his uncles occupied an important position, and under him obtained good employment.

In the midst of the gaiety of the capital the young man soon began to forget the lessons of his mother and the practises of his holy religion, which had formerly given him so much joy. The irreligious companions with whom he associated, and who mocked everything that spoke to them of God, by degrees made an impression on him, and he soon became like one of themselves. Had his good mother the Countess been still alive, she would almost have failed to recognize her son in the young man now become, if not entirely impious, at least perfectly indifferent.

For some time he continued to live a dissipated life, in which he found only remorse and disappointment. His existence was to him now an intolerable burden. "What, after all, is life to me?" he said one day to himself. "I will soon put an end to all my troubles."

He took up a revolver for this purpose; but before he would use it for his unhallowed design he desired to write a few lines which would be read by those who might discover his inanimate body, and in which his servants or others might be freed from all blame.

He could not find a pen on his desk; he looked into other drawers, but without success. "This is unfortunate," he said; "where have I put my pens? However, a pencil will suit my purpose." And he sat down to write the letter with it. But, as he was about to begin his eyes fell on a little box which he had formerly placed in one of the drawers, and which he had for a long time forgotten. He opened it, and he saw for the first time for many years the white silk badge

of his First Communion, which he himself had placed there in the days of his innocence.

At the same moment the words of his mother said to him on that First Communion day came back vividly before his mind: "If you ever should lose the Faith of your childhood, may the sight of this little badge bring you back to it again."

The tears came unbidden into his eyes, and he once again, as he had done before, pressed his lips against it as he held it in his hands. He fell on his knees and exclaimed in the midst of now abundant tears: "What was I about to do? To commit a crime by which I could never, never see my mother again—my mother who in Heaven is waiting for me. O my God, be Thou for ever blessed for having so lovingly preserved me from this terrible evil."

Alain threw away the revolver and lay down to enjoy a calm repose. The next morning his first act was to go to the church, where, prostrate at the foot of the altar, he uttered these words: "O my God, I have come back again, and with Thy holy grace I will never again forsake the Faith of my childhood."

He kept his word.

But he kept also, and dearly cherished, the badge of his First Communion.

THE COLONEL IN THE CRIMEA.

During the Crimean War, a French officer, who was a man of great piety, received an order to attack one of the enemy's strongholds. In an instant he was at his post at the head of his men, and rushed forward to the attack. The onset was terrible, but in the midst of the glittering bayonets and the showers of bullets the officer was as calm as if he were on parade. His bravery gained the day and the fort was captured. His general, who had witnessed

the scene from a distance, went to meet him. "Colonel," he cried out, "what bravery! Where did you learn to be so calm and so self-possessed in the midst of such imminent danger?" "My General," he answered, with sublime simplicity, "I received Holy Communion this morning." All who heard this answer were filled with admiration at so much courage and piety.

ST. CLARE PROTECTED.

Frederic II was attacking the town of Assisi, with an army composed of the lowest ranks of society, and many were infidels. Near the gate of the city stood a convent of nuns, governed by the holy abbess St. Clare. This was the first place these ruffians attacked. They placed ladders against the walls and prepared to ascend, and it seemed as if in a few moments the spouses of Christ would fall into the hands of those wicked men. But Jesus was there to help His servants. In this extremity St. Clare called together her nuns, and going into the chapel, she, by an inspiration from Heaven, caused the ciborium containing the Sacred Body of Our Lord to be carried to the place where the men were already beginning to ascend; then with her eyes raised up towards it, she said: "O my beloved Jesus, save Thy servants whom Thou hast brought hither to serve Thee, and whom Thou dost so often nourish with Thy precious Body." Her prayer ended, she was interiorly admonished that the protection of Heaven was over her. The soldiers were struck blind, and a panic arose among them; they all took flight as though pursued by an immense army.

NEGLECT OF THANKSGIVING.

St. Philip Neri one day, to his sorrow, noticed that a person who had just received Communion was getting up and going away. He

at once told two altar boys to take a lighted taper each, and to accompany the person home. Surprised at this, the young man asked what it could mean, and on the children referring him to St. Philip, he went to inquire of the saint, who said: "When the priest carries the Blessed Sacrament, he is always accompanied by two acolytes bearing lighted candles: the same honor, it seems to me, is due to any one who carries It in his heart!" Recognizing his fault, the young man returned to church and made a due thanksgiving. How many nowadays might take this lesson to heart?

LOTHAIRE'S SACRILEGE.

A terrible example of the judgment of God on the sacrilegious communicant is related in the history of Lothaire, who lived in the ninth century. Like Henry VIII, he had put away his lawful wife, to marry another woman named Valrade, for whom he had conceived a guilty passion. For this he was excommunicated by Pope Adrian, who condemned this second marriage as a most grievous crime. Thereupon Lothaire sought to impose upon his Holiness by the specious appearance of repentance, and came to Rome to be absolved from the censures of the Church, representing to the Pope that he had entirely broken off the guilty connection. Deceived by his hypocrisy, Adrian absolved him, and, at his earnest request, consented to communicate him and his principal officers with his own hands, in token of their reconciliation with the Church. The day appointed having arrived, Pope Adrian celebrated the Sacred Mysteries in the presence of the King. At the moment of Communion, taking in his hand the Body of Our Lord, he turned towards Lothaire and said: "Prince, if you have sincerely renounced all connection with Valrade, approach with confidence and receive the Sacrament of eternal life. But if your repentance is not sincere, do not rashly

receive the Body and Blood of Our Lord, and by profaning them, eat and drink your own condemnation." Then turning to the courtiers he said: "If you have neither consented nor contributed to your master's crimes, may the Body of Our Lord be to you a pledge of eternal life!" Some of those present, struck with terror at the words, drew back, but the King and the greater portion of his followers consummated their crime by receiving Holy Communion. A short time after, Lothaire set out on his return to France, anxious to rejoin as soon as possible the wicked woman whom he had pretended to dismiss. He had not gone far, however, when he was overtaken by the judgment of Heaven. At Lucca, both himself and his train were attacked by a malignant fever, which produced upon its victims the most frightful effects. The hair, nails, and even the skin fell off, while an inward fire consumed them. Thus did many die under the eyes of the king; those only were preserved who had withdrawn in time from the Holy Table. Lothaire himself, hardened by his sacrilege and his wicked passion, strove to continue his journey, until at last, losing both sense and speech, he perished miserably without hope or sign of repentance.

DEATH-BED OF A BAD COMMUNICANT.

In one of the towns which border on the Rhine there lived a man who had given himself up to every passion, and had become by his life a scandal to all who knew him. Being at length upon his death-bed, his family, who were good Catholics, sent for the priest, who heard the sick man's confession, and prepared to visit the Holy Viaticum. He had already taken the Blessed Sacrament in his hand, and was about to place it on the sick man's tongue, when the latter cried out, "Stop, Father, stop!" I made a sacrilegious first Communion, and have never made a Communion since. I will not have

two bad Communion upon my conscience. One surely is sufficient to suffer for in hell for all eternity!" In vain did the priest and the bystanders, struck with horror, exhort him to repentance, and remind him of the Infinite Mercy of God, who is every ready to pardon the repentant sinner. He sank into the depths of despair and died miserably.

THE PLANTER.

In the Southern States, there lived a wealthy planter, who for many years had been quite indifferent to all religion, and was now about to die. A priest was sent for, and he soon arrived at the planter's dwelling. His presence filled the family with joy, for every one hoped that he would be able to afford help and consolation to the sick man, who on hearing of the arrival of the priest did not refuse to see him. What took place in this interview is known but to God alone. After a long conversation with his penitent, the priest left him, but shortly after returned, bringing with him the Blessed Eucharist, that sacred pledge of resurrection and life. At the sight of the Sacred Host the sick man cried out in tones of terror, "Behold my Judge!" The priest tried to reassure him, reminding him that the Mercy of God is Infinite. It was all in vain. "I have sinned," cried out the sick man, "I have betrayed innocent blood. The first time I communicated, it was unworthily." So saying he covered his face with his hands, sank back in his bed, and expired.

THE VIRTUOUS PAGE.

St. Elizabeth, Queen of Portugal, had in her service as page a pious and faithful youth, whom she was accustomed to employ in the distribution of her alms. One of his fellow pages, filled with envy at the confidence reposed in him, determined to effect his ruin,

and accordingly suggested to the king that he was regarded with too much favor by the saintly queen. The slander was believed, and the king, stung with jealousy, resolved to take away the life of the page. For this purpose he gave orders to the master of a limekiln, that if, on a certain day, he should send to him a page to inquire whether he had executed the king's commands, he should at once seize him and cast him into the furnace, for that he had been guilty of a grievous crime, and deserved death. On the day appointed he called for the youth, and having given the message that had been agreed upon, he sent him to deliver it. Now it happened that the page on his way to the kiln passed by a church at the very moment when the bell was ringing for the Elevation. As it had always been his pious custom in such a case not to pass on until the Holy Sacrifice was ended, he entered the church and knelt down to hear the remainder of the Mass. When it was concluded, reflecting that he had not heard an entire Mass that day, according to his usual practice, he remained in the church and heard another. Meanwhile the king became impatient to know whether his designs had succeeded, and, by a wonderful Providence of God, despatched the accuser himself to inquire whether his orders had been executed. This being the very message agreed upon with the master of the kiln, the unhappy youth was immediately seized, and, in spite of all his remonstrances, cast amid the burning lime, where he was quickly consumed. As soon as the Mass was concluded, the page who had been first dispatched hastened on to deliver his message. Upon inquiring whether the king's orders had been executed, he was told that they had, and he returned with this message to the king. The latter, seeing him return, was struck with fear and amazement, and, upon hearing the circumstances, perceived at once the innocence of the youth, and admired the Justice and Providence of God, who, while

He protected and preserved the virtuous page, allowed the very punishment designed for him to fall on the head of his calumniator.

“WHY DO YOU WEEP, MY CHILD?”

In a certain house where children were received for their education, there was the pious custom, when the time for First Communion drew near, that the more wealthy among them should help poor children in the city to prepare for that event, not only by giving them instructions, but by providing them with suitable clothing.

On the eve of that great day these children were assembled in one place for prayers and instructions. They had all been to Confession, and looked forward to the next morning with hearts full of joy and happiness. One child only, a little girl, sat by herself with a sad countenance, and tears flowing from her eyes.

The Superioress, seeing this, went to her and said: “Why do you weep, my child? Are you ill?” “No,” she answered.

“Have your companions been striking you, or have they said anything to grieve you?”

“No,” was again the only answer.

“Have you any affliction at home among your friends?”

“Oh, no,” she again answered.

“What, then, my dear child, is the matter with you? Tell me; perhaps I may be able to comfort you.”

The girl answered: “Oh, I am yet only a little child, and I have offended the good God so much! I have been the cause of the sufferings and death of Jesus on the Cross! How could I be joyful when I think of all that?”

The Superioress consoled the humble child by telling her how much God loves those who are sorry for having offended Him. Next morning she made her First Communion with angelic piety.

III. CONFIRMATION.

ST. MAURILLUS AND THE DYING CHILD.

St. Martin, the Apostle of Gaul, had consecrated Maurillus Bishop of Angers, a man revered by all for his holy life.

One day a lady went to him asking him to come at once to confirm her little boy, who was dying, because she did not want him to appear before God without the seal of Confirmation. The bishop, who was preparing to say Mass, answered that as soon as the Holy Sacrifice was ended he would attend to her request. But when it was ended, and when he had reached the house where the child was, he found that it had just died.

The holy man was filled with grief as he gazed on the body of the boy, not only on account of his death, but principally because it had left this life without having received the precious grace of Confirmation before entering eternity, and he bitterly reproached himself for not having gone at the moment he had been sent for.

To do penance for this fault—for he considered it a great one, though in itself no blame for neglect could have been attributed to him—he took the resolution to leave Angers and live in some unknown place, to weep before God for this offense.

The people of the town and diocese of Angers, having discovered his flight, caused a diligent search to be made for him throughout the country, and having at length discovered him, would not leave him until he consented to return with them.

He had scarcely reached the town, his mind still troubled at the result of his negligence, when, urged by the Spirit of God, he went

to the place where the remains of the boy were interred, and when he reached it, he fell prostrate on the ground and, shedding abundant tears, poured forth the most fervent prayers that God might not deprive the child of the graces specially given to those who have received the Holy Ghost, since it was by no fault of the boy, but only by his own, that he was deprived of them.

And as he continued for a long time to pray in this manner, God was pleased to work a miracle in his favor. The dead child suddenly came forth from the grave, and, kneeling at his feet, waited there in silence, as if he expected to receive some favor. Maurillus, whose heart now overflowed with happiness, went with all haste for the Sacred Chrism, and, returning to the grave, instantly confirmed him, imposing on him the name of Remigius.

Instead of returning again to the grave, the boy, raising up his eyes towards those of the bishop, thanked him for the blessing he had bestowed on him. At the same time he told him that it was the will of God that he should live for many more years in this world.

His mother, full of joy and gratitude, took him home with her, and under her care he grew up in piety, leading so perfect a life that, when he was of age, he was ordained priest, and finally, when St. Maurillus was called to receive his reward, he was chosen to succeed him in the See of Angers.

GOD OR MAMMON? HE CHOSE TO SERVE GOD.

Saturnus held the high office of majordomo in the palace of Hünericus, King of the Vandals. He and his family were Christians, but practised their religion in secret, because of the hatred of the king for all who were not Arians.

When it was told the king that Saturnus was a Catholic, he was

filled with great fury at the thought that one who held so high a position in his house and kingdom should profess the Catholic faith. So, calling him into his presence, he threatened, not only to deprive him of his position and wealth, but even to reduce his wife and children to the state of slavery, if he would not renounce the Catholic faith and become an Arian.

Saturnus bravely replied that he must obey God rather than man, and that nothing the king could do to him would ever make him unfaithful to his duty to God.

His wife, hearing of this noble resolution, was filled with dismay; for although she too was a Catholic, she was like many in the world, and thought more of the present life than of that which is to come. Going to her husband, she threw herself on her knees at his feet, and begged of him by all that he held dear not to bring ruin on himself and her and on their children. "I beseech you," she said, "not to cast at your feet the noble position in which you are placed. What will become of us if you thus throw away the wealth we now possess? And think, too, of the awful degradation of being made slaves, and of our children being deprived of an alliance with the noble families to which they aspire. Oh! God can not want of us so great a sacrifice! He can not be so cruel! He can not be angry with you for doing through force and necessity what so many have done of their own free will and without remorse."

But the faithful servant of Christ answered her in the words of Job to his wife: "You speak like one of the foolish women. I would have cause to fear, O woman, if, for the sake of the comforts of this life I would lose the happiness of Heaven. If you really loved me, your husband, as you say you do, you would never have dared to bring about my eternal ruin by such words as you have spoken, and by these treacherous caresses you have lavished on me.

Let the king take away from me my wife," he continued, as if speaking to himself, "and my children, and my possessions; I resign myself to God's holy will, remembering the words of Jesus Christ, Who said: 'If a man forsake not his wife and his children, and his fields and his house, he can not be My disciple.'"

His wife went away shedding tears. Saturnus was deposed from his office, deprived of all his wealth, and after undergoing many bodily sufferings from the hands of the cruel king, was cast out into the world to beg his bread.

ST. FIDELIS, MARTYR.

In the town of Sigmaringen, which is situated in one of the provinces of Germany, St. Fidelis was born in the year of our Lord 1577.

At the time of his birth it was thought that either the mother or the child would certainly die. When the mother heard this, she fervently prayed to God in these words: "O my God, if it is necessary that one of us must die, take me to Thyself, and spare my child, that it may be born again to Thee by Baptism, and may thus one day inherit the Kingdom of Heaven."

As a reward for this generous self-sacrifice the child was safely brought into the world, and the mother recovered.

But this was not the only favor she received from God for her child, for the Holy Ghost bestowed on him the gift of wisdom in a high degree, and made him one of the most learned men of his time, and also the gift of understanding, which showed him how to become a great saint.

At his Baptism he received the name of Mark.

When he grew up he chose the profession of a lawyer, in which he gained for himself much distinction; he was accounted to be the

most just, the most successful, and the most learned lawyer in the whole country.

The poor loved him because he pleaded their cause with so much earnestness, and the wealthy esteemed him because he sought in his pleadings only the prosperous issue of whatever was entrusted to him, instead of wishing to heap up riches for himself at their expense.

This made the other members of the profession entertain feelings of animosity towards him. "Why do you always try to finish so soon the causes you take in hand?" they used to say to him. "You will never make a fortune in that way; besides, in acting thus, you do injury to us, as well as to yourself."

Mark answered: "To act in the manner you suggest, by prolonging causes without reason, is to be guilty of injustice. How can you conscientiously charge against others even the errors which your carelessness may have caused, much less retain for yourselves what you may have acquired by unnecessary delays? No, I will never sully my conscience by such sinful conduct."

These words, spoken with such firmness, only served to increase their animosity; they persecuted him without ceasing, and did everything their jealousy could suggest to injure him.

"O wicked world!" he exclaimed, when he perceived their malice; "what a dangerous thing it is for an upright man to live in the midst of such iniquity! How impious are your maxims! How difficult it is to be at the same time a rich advocate and a good Christian!" From that moment he formed the resolution of forsaking it altogether to consecrate himself to God in religion.

The Order he chose was that of the Capuchins on account of its poverty and severity. On entering it, he adopted the name of Fidelis. When those who had known him in the world had learned

of the step he had taken, and that the eloquent lawyer had put on the dress of the poorest Order in the Church, they were filled with amazement, and thought that he had suddenly become demented.

"Ah, my friends," he replied to them, "what more glorious exchange could I have made? I have sacrificed for God's sake the perishable things of this world, and in return He has promised me the eternal joys of Heaven. Judge for yourself whether or not I have made a bad bargain!"

St. Fidelis, after a holy life, shed his blood in testimony of his love of God, and now reigns among the white-robed army of the martyrs in Paradise.

THE CHILDREN'S MARTYRDOM.

Maximian hated the very name of Christian, and determined to put to death every one who professed the religion of Jesus Christ. Many martyrs sealed their faith with their blood in the terrible persecution he raised up against the Church. He did not spare even little children, but put them also to death without mercy. The historians of those terrible times have recorded the following story:

There were two brothers belonging to a noble Christian family whom the emperor resolved to deprive of their Faith. They were only little children when he caused them to be brought to his palace.

At first he gave them sweetmeats and other things which delight the hearts of children, and they received them with the greatest pleasure. As they were beginning to grow up he gave them some food to eat which they had seen him offer to idols, but they both at once immediately refused to touch it.

"Our parents told us," they said, "that we must never eat anything that has been offered to idols."

At this unexpected resistance to his wishes on the part of mere infants the emperor became exceedingly angry, and ordered them to be cruelly beaten; yet they would not yield.

He next ordered a great fire to be kindled and a caldron full of water to be placed upon it. When the water began to boil, he commanded the children to be stripped of their clothing and thrown into it.

As soon as this was done the younger boy died. His brother, seeing that he was dead, cried out: "O my brother, thou hast conquered!" Then, throwing his arms around him, he also fell down and expired.

Thus was the cruel emperor vanquished by little children in whom the Holy Ghost dwelt, and by whose mouth He spoke, according to those words of the Sacred Scriptures: "Out of the mouths of infants and of sucklings Thou has perfected praise."

The Christians of Nicomedia secretly buried their bodies, and every year on the anniversary of their triumph they celebrated a joyous festival under the name of "The Children's Martyrdom."

ST. IGNATIUS' TEMPTATIONS.

When Satan saw the great fervor of St. Ignatius of Loyola he began to tempt him, that he might make him fall into sin.

The first temptation was one of pride. He put into his heart the thought that he was already a great Saint, and that God must be pleased because he was so holy, and because he had performed so many penances, and had said so many prayers, and had done so many works of charity.

St. Ignatius knew that such thoughts could not come from God. He remembered also that he had been at one time a great sinner, and

that all his good works were but little when compared with his former sins. By this thought he put away the temptation.

When Satan saw himself thus defeated, he tried another kind of temptation, by which he hoped to turn him away from his holy life. "How can you imagine that you shall be able to continue this kind of life to the end?" he whispered in his heart. "You are young, and have at least fifty years to live. How could you live so austere a life for so long a time?"

The saint saw that this also was a temptation; so he raised up his mind to Heaven, and asked God for help to overcome it, and God heard his prayer. "Begone, Satan!" he said. "How can you promise me fifty years more of life, since it is not in your power to give me even one day? And even although it were certain that I was to live all those years, what are they when compared to eternity? God, who supports me to-day by His grace, will also support me to-morrow, and every day till the end of my life."

It was in this way, by the power of the Holy Ghost, that the saint overcame these temptations of the Devil, and persevered in his holy life.

TO-MORROW NEVER CAME.

There was once a father of a family who lived in the neglect of his religious duties. He led a blameless life in the eyes of the world because he was honest and kind, and was most attentive to his business. People called him an excellent man.

He had a daughter who was well instructed in her religion, and she knew that, though the world had so high an esteem for her father, he was at enmity with God; and because she loved him, the sad state of his soul made her very uneasy.

One evening, when they were sitting alone, she gently said to him:

"Father, would you not be much happier if you went to the Sacraments and lived a holy life?"

"Oh! I am quite happy as I am," he answered; "my conscience does not trouble me. Am I not honest, and beloved by everyone around me? What more could I desire?"

"Ah, yes, my father, that is true; but of what avail will the esteem of the world be to you when you come to the hour of your death if you have not pleased God?"

"God is good," replied her father, "and He will have mercy on me, and take me to Heaven. Oh, no, God would never send me to Hell. He is too good to do that. Besides, I intend to serve God better when I have more time; but, at present, I have no time to think about these things."

The poor girl's words had no effect on him. He continued, as before, to seek the esteem of the world and the good favor of men, and to neglect his religious duties.

But the hour of death came to him. It came when he was least expecting it; it came one day when he was busy with his worldly affairs, and it came suddenly. He died without the priest and without the Sacraments, because, when in health, he had put off till to-morrow—a to-morrow that never came—and had lived for the world, and not for God.

But that is not the way in which the Saints lived. They lived for God alone.

HEROIC FAITH OF A CHILD.

In the year 1833 a violent persecution was raised against the Church by the King of Cochin China, and many of the Christians were cruelly tortured and put to death for the Faith.

These good people showed the greatest joy in the midst of their

sufferings, and even the little children nobly confessed the Faith, and offered themselves to the judge to receive the crown of martyrdom.

One day a little boy presented himself before the tribunal of the judge. He threw himself on his knees before him and asked permission to speak.

When he obtained permission, he said: "Mandarin, cut off my head with the sword, that I may go to my own country."

"Where is your country?" asked the judge.

"It is Heaven," replied the child.

"And where are your parents?"

"They are gone home to Heaven, and I want to follow them. Oh, sir, give me a stroke with the sword and send me there too."

The mandarin was struck with admiration at the faith and courage of the boy, but refused to grant him his request. But this child received from God the glory of the martyrs on account of his great desire of being a martyr.

We may not be able to shed our blood for the Faith; but if we live for Heaven and for God as the martyrs did, God will give us Heaven as our reward in His own good time.

THE RESOLUTE OFFICER.

An officer, illustrious for his birth and fortune, was on the point of obtaining a very lucrative situation, when he was accused of being a Christian, that religion excluding him, by the laws, from all offices and dignities. The governor gave him four hours for consideration, and told him to weigh well what he was going to do. During the interval which had been given him, he was visited by the bishop, who took him by the hand, led him to the Church, and begged of him to enter the sanctuary. Here, at the foot of the altar,

the bishop pointed to the sword which the officer wore, and presenting him, at the same time, with a copy of the Gospels, asked him which he would choose. The officer, without hesitation, with his right hand took hold of the Sacred Book. "Adhere, then, to God," said the holy Bishop, "be faithful to Him, and He will fortify you, and recompense your choice. Depart in peace." The officer went from the church, and presenting himself before the governor, made a generous confession of his faith in Jesus Christ. Sentence of death was then pronounced upon him, and he, by expiring for his faith in sharp but passing torments, merited eternal and ineffable joys.

FORTITUDE OF A MARTYR.

Among the numerous confessors of the Faith who, during this present century, have courageously undergone torments and death in the kingdom of Tonkin, the name of Michael Mi is deserving of special mention. He was arrested, along with his aged father-in-law, Anthony, on the charge of being concerned in the concealment of a priest, who was taken, and who suffered with them. The poor old Anthony, who was on the verge of seventy, shuddered at the sight of the instruments of torture which were displayed before the tribunal, but Michael encouraged him by reminding him of the eternal reward which they were about to purchase so cheaply, at the price of a few short and passing sufferings. "And as to the stripes which you dread, fear not, father," said he, "I will offer myself to endure them in your place." Accordingly, after he himself had been flogged without mercy, so that his whole body was a mass of wounds and blood, he, of his own accord, lay down again upon the ground, saying to the judge, "My father is aged and infirm; take pity on him, and suffer me to be flogged in his stead." And when

this was permitted, he with the greatest joy endured a second scourging, nor did a groan or sigh escape him while his wounds were being re-opened, and his flesh again torn and rent asunder. After many examinations and cruel torments, the three confessors of the Faith were at length condemned to be beheaded, and set out with serene and joyful countenances for the place of execution. Michael Mi distinguished himself especially by his undaunted courage. "Give me some money," said the executioner to him, "and I will promise to cut off your head at a single blow, so that you may have less to suffer." Cut it into a hundred pieces if you like," said the Christian hero, "it matters not, provided that you manage somehow to cut it off. As for money, I have plenty at home, but I would rather that it should be given to the poor." So saying, he bent his head to receive the fatal stroke, and went to receive the triple crown of faith, charity, and filial piety.

ST. MARTIN AND THE ROBBER.

St. Martin, of Tours, while yet a youth, was traveling over the Alps, when he fell into the hands of robbers, one of whom drew his sword and held it suspended over his head, as if about to inflict a mortal blow. He would, indeed, have done so, had not his companion stayed his hand. The holy youth showed no symptom of fear, but recommended himself entirely to the protection and disposal of Divine Providence. The robbers, struck with astonishment at his calmness and self-possession in so imminent a danger, asked him who he was, and whether he was not filled with fear at the sight of the sword uplifted to slay him? He replied that he was a Christian, and that he had no fear, because he knew that the Divine Goodness is always most ready to protect us both in life and death,

and that it is never nearer to us than when we are exposed to the greatest danger. He added that his only subject of grief was, that they, by the lives they led, deprived themselves of the mercy of God. The robbers listened to him with astonishment, and admired the courage and confidence in God which virtue inspires. His fervent words made a deep impression upon their hearts, and he who had attempted to kill him became a Christian, and, entering into a monastery, led henceforth a life of devotion and penance.

JULIAN AND HIS PAGE.

It is related by the historian Prudentius, that the Roman Emperor Julian, who had been brought up a Christian, but abandoned his religion upon ascending the throne, determined to make public profession of his impiety by a solemn sacrifice to the idols. He accordingly repaired to the temple, attended by all his court, among whom was a Christian page, who had a short time previously been admitted to the Sacrament of Confirmation. Everything being ready for the sacrifice, the Emperor ordered the priests to commence the sacred rites. They endeavored to do so, and raised their knives to strike the victims prepared for the sacrifice; but what was their astonishment when they found themselves unable to proceed! Their knives became suddenly blunted and incapable of inflicting a wound; while, to add to their consternation, the fire on the altar was suddenly extinguished. Thereupon the presiding priest exclaimed, "Some unknown power prevents our sacrifice. There must be some Christian present, who has been baptized or confirmed." The Emperor, on hearing these words, immediately ordered search to be made, when behold! one of his own pages stood forth and thus addressed him: "Know, O Emperor, that I am a Christian, and have been bap-

tized. A few days ago I was anointed with the holy oil to strengthen me for the combat. I am a disciple of Jesus Christ, who has redeemed me by His Cross. It was I, or rather the God whom I serve, who prevented the impiety you were on the point of committing. I invoked the sacred name of Jesus, and the demons had no longer any power. In the name of Jesus Christ, who is the true God, they have been put to flight." At these words the Emperor, who, though an apostate through malice and self-interest, knew well the power of the name of Jesus, was struck with terror, and fearing the Divine vengeance, retired from the temple in confusion. The Christians, on the other hand, were filled with courage at seeing the admirable effects produced in the soul by the strengthening grace of Confirmation.

THE CHINESE CHILD.

A Chinese girl of ten met with a missionary, and entreated him to give her Confirmation. "And if the mandarin puts you into prison for your faith, what will you say?" asked the priest. "I will say I am a Christian." "And if he bids you renounce your faith, what will you do?" I will say: 'never.'" "And if he brings the executioners to cut off your head, what will you say?" "I will say: 'Cut it off.'" Delighted at seeing the child so firm and resolute, the missionary acceded to her wishes, in spite of her tender years, and shortly she was confirmed.

CALIGULA'S HEART.

The body of the Emperor Caligula was taken to be burnt, according to the Roman custom. It was all soon reduced to ashes, except

the heart, which the fire seemed unable to affect. It was found to contain a certain poison which neutralized the action of the fire. When that was extracted, the heart was consumed like the rest of the body. It was not the fire that failed, but all depended on the state of the heart.—Wo to us if the fire of the Holy Spirit takes no hold on us! The poison of sin in the heart can alone paralyze that divine and powerful flame.

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